

King leaves today for Oman, UAE

AMMAN (AFP) — His Majesty King Abdullah leaves today for official visits to Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for talks with Gulf leaders. King Abdullah is due to meet with Sultan Qaboos during his 24-hour visit to Oman on Saturday before heading to the UAE, where he will meet on Sunday with Emirates President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan.

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Jordan's ties with Arab states to be based on mutual respect — King

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah has said in an newspaper interview that Jordan's relations with Israel will not be at the expense of the Kingdom's ties with Arab countries, particularly Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Palestine.

"I have no problem with any other Arab country, and in the new era we are opening a new stage with all Arab states based on mutual respect," the King said in an interview published Friday by the London-based Arabic daily *Al Quds Al Arabi*.

In reference to Jordan's relations with Egypt, the King said: "Coordination between both countries is at its highest level."

With reference to Syria, King Abdullah expressed his admiration for Bashar Assad, son of President Hafez Assad.

The King said that when the young Assad visited Amman to offer condolences on King Hussein's passing, he spoke about his visions for the future of Syria.

"Bashar Assad expressed his views about political changes and modernisation of his country to meet current developments throughout the world," King Abdullah said.

On relations with Arab Gulf

states, the King said: "We maintain good relations with these states and we understand their present financial circumstances, and that's why we did not ask for assistance or financial grants, but look forward to close economic cooperation that ensures the interests of both sides, like opening the door to Jordanian workers and opening the markets to Jordanian industrial and agricultural products."

However, the King added that "we do not establish relations with an Arab country at the expense of another, and we look for good relations with all Arab states on the basis of common interests. In this respect I will pay state visits in the coming few days to Syria, Libya, Oman, the UAE and Qatar."

King Abdullah, who was scheduled to leave for the UAE and Oman on Saturday, said: "Jordan will not be drawn to any form of military or political intervention in Iraq. We are at the start of a new era and we give priority to our domestic affairs and to putting our home in order and strengthening national unity. Therefore, we have no ambition to play a regional role in Iraq or in any other country."

We have clarified this point to the Gulf countries' officials. What concerns us in Jordan is seeing a united and stable Iraq and Iraqi people relieved of their suffering. Jordan will not serve as a springboard for any military or hostile actions against Iraq."

King Abdullah said there is no political or media activity by the Iraqi opposition groups in Jordan.

Jordanian papers tackle Iraqi issues in a manner that is more inclined towards neutrality, although some of the articles continue to express sympathy towards the Iraqi people, the King said.

Some of the papers demand the lifting of the sanctions and warn against alleged U.S. conspiracies to partition Iraq, King Abdullah said.

With reference to the Palestinian question, King Abdullah said: "I have agreed with President Arafat not to allow a third party to come between us or try to exploit any differences in our points of view. We have also agreed to maintain direct contacts between us and to hold consultations about every question and remove any misunderstanding that might crop up."

(Continued on page 2)

Bodybuilder stripped of title 'admits' taking banned substance

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — A Jordanian bodybuilder who was stripped of his title by the International Body Building Federation (IFBB) following a positive drug test has indirectly admitted using medicines containing substances that could be considered as performance-enhancing drugs.

Mustafa Hassanein, who won the over 90-kilogramme bodybuilding contest in Turkey last November, was reportedly disqualified from the championship and stripped of his medal.

An IFBB report, which was obtained last week by the Jordan Times, indicated that Hassanein was not among the medal winners at the 1998 IFBB Men's World Amateur BodyBuilding Championships in Izmir.

IFBB regulations stipulate that doping offences require a two-year suspension for a first time offence and a lifetime suspension for a second offence. National federations are also fined if they fail to ensure that their national team members are competing drug-free.

Updated results obtained from the IFBB made no mention of Hassanein as a gold medal winner, which went to

the Russian bodybuilder Sergei Chlestov, while second place was given to the Ukrainian national Oleg Protas.

The IFBB results noted that the final placements differ from those originally posted and reflect results of the doping control tests conducted on medalists after the finals.

Hassanein told Jordan Television on Friday that following an injury he sustained last year he was advised by his Austrian doctor to use cortisone and another medication which apparently included banned substances.

"I did not know that this substance could last in the body for 14 months..." Hassanein told Jordan Television.

"I have undergone many medical checks but the mistake [I made] is to use the cortisone, which is not considered as a drug but in fact is prohibited by the International Olympic Committee," Hassanein added.

The IFBB report came as a shock to me. It has damaged not only my reputation but my country as well," said the Jordanian bodybuilder, who currently resides in Vienna.

During the TV show, Minister of Youth and Sports Mohammad Kheir Mansur said that a severe punishment would be handed down to Hassanein.

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Rawabdeh government wins strongest vote of confidence in history

Prime minister pledges to improve economy, strengthen Arab ties

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, armed with the strongest parliamentary vote of confidence in Jordan's history, has promised to do his utmost to bring the country out of an economic recession, forge ahead with the peace treaty with Israel and improve ties with Arab states.

Rawabdeh, speaking on Thursday at the end of a three-day debate before his government won 66 votes in the 80-member House, said the government was ready to review

controversial press and public freedom laws — a main demand of opposition parties and human rights groups at home and abroad.

After the parliamentary session, His Majesty King Abdullah visited the Prime Ministry and congratulated Rawabdeh.

In his policy statement submitted last Saturday, Rawabdeh indicated that the government will contact its debtors to reschedule, scrap or transfer some of its foreign debt into grants.

During Thursday's session, only 12

lawmakers withheld confidence in

Rawabdeh's 23-member Cabinet, the first named since King Abdullah assumed the Throne, while two other deputies abstained.

Five centrist deputies including pro-government lawmaker Abdul Karim Dughmi, five leftist and two Islamist MPs withheld their confidence in Rawabdeh's team.

Rawabdeh received such a ringing endorsement because his programme was convincing and he is respected by deputies for his intelligence and competence," one deputy, who asked not to be named, said.

"The absence of opposition mem-

bers and keenness to show support for the King and his government explains the high number of votes Rawabdeh received," the deputy told the Jordan Times.

The Muslim Brotherhood's political arm, the Islamic Action Front, boycotted the 1997 parliamentary elections over the enactment of a controversial Election Law.

In his rebuttal on Thursday, the premier described his government statement as a "strategy that cannot be implemented in days, months or years."

"Our policy statement is a letter of

intent... requiring an outline of priorities, which we will do," the premier told lawmakers. He was interrupted several times by applause from citizens attending the three-hour session.

Rawabdeh, who accompanied King Abdullah on a trip to Saudi Arabia last week, stressed that his government intends to strengthen its ties with all Arab states "with no exception," adding that Jordan will never resort to the "axis policy" of one Arab party against another.

Analysts believe that the government's foreign policy will focus on Arab relations, especially ahead of

the May 17 Israeli elections. Jordan is keen not to appear to be supporting any particular party in the Israeli polls.

The premier was echoing King Abdullah's instructions in his letter of designation to Rawabdeh to focus on maintaining strong ties with Arab states, especially those neighbouring the Kingdom.

The King is scheduled to begin a visit to Oman and the United Arab Emirates on Saturday. He is expected to hold talks with Syrian President Hafez Assad later this month.

During the session, Rawabdeh cast

King, Queen receive Queen Noor at airport

AMMAN (Petra) — Their Majesties King Abdullah and Queen Rania last night received at the airport Her Majesty Queen Noor and Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hamzah, Prince Mohammad Ben Talal and Princess Taghrid, who arrived from London. King Abdullah and Queen Rania were accompanied by Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kababish, HRH Prince Rashid and the British chargé de affaires in Amman. Prince Hamzah will spend three weeks in the Kingdom before leaving for London to resume his studies at Sandhurst.

Top Palestinian official advises Arafat not to delay statehood

RAMALLAH (AFP) — A top Palestinian official warned Yasser Arafat Friday against any delay in declaring a Palestinian state as Israeli officials cautioned that talks on the final status of the territories could last as long as three years.

Giving in to international pressure not to declare an independent state when interim peace accords expire on May 4 would damage Palestinian national interests, said Assembly speaker Ahmad Qureia, one of the principal architects of the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements.

"A delay would have a grave impact on Palestinian interests," he argued in full-page articles in the Palestinian dailies *Al Ayyam* and *Al Hayat Al Jadida*.

The Palestinian leadership would lose credibility both domestically and internationally," he said.

Qureia is the first Palestinian official to speak out publicly against the mounting international pressure on Arafat to defer declaration of a Palestinian state until after Israeli elections on May 17 and June 1 to prevent it becoming a campaign issue.

Arafat is currently on the last, Far Eastern, leg of an international tour aimed at gauging the opinion of world governments on Palestinian statehood, and last week the Palestinians gave the first hint that they might bow to pressure to delay the declaration.

The various Palestinian parties will meet before the end of April to decide whether to declare a Palestinian state [on May 4] or postpone the declaration for a limited time," Palestinian International Cooperation Minister Nabil Shaath told reporters in Cairo.

But the Palestinian speaker said that world leaders were mistaken if they believed that a declaration of statehood would play into the hands of the hawkish government of right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"On the contrary, a delay would give his campaign a major fillip by allowing him to present himself as a strong prime minister who protects Israeli interests and forces concessions from the Palestinians," Qureia said.

Prolonging the interim five-year period of Palestinian autonomy agreed at Oslo, "would give Israel longer to continue its policy of expanding Jewish settlements [in the occupied territories], Judaizing Jerusalem and prevaricating over the release of Palestinian prisoners," he said.

(Continued on page 2)

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation

جordan Times يومية مستقلة نصدرها عن المؤسسة الصحفية العربية الاردنية



A woman inspects damage to a family house in Aleksinac, 160 km south of Belgrade, on Friday. The NATO aerial campaign against Yugoslavia has entered its third week (AP photo)

Yeltsin warns of war over Kosovo; new NATO strikes on Good Friday

124 injured at hit factory; envoy's bid to free U.S. soldiers fails

BELGRADE (Agencies) — NATO unleashed wide-ranging air strikes against Yugoslavia on Orthodox Good Friday, with fiery hits on an oil depot and a weapons complex containing the factory.

In Moscow, President Boris Yeltsin got tough with the West, warning NATO not to drag Russia into Kosovo because it could spark a European or even world war.

Alarming bells rang after Russia's Interfax news agency reported that Yeltsin had ordered strategic missiles to be reprogrammed to targets in NATO states bombing Yugoslavia.

The United States said it had been assured by Moscow that Russia would stay out of the Yugoslavia conflict and not targeted NATO countries with nuclear weapons.

"We've been officially reassured at a high level that Russia will not be drawn into the conflict in the Balkans," White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said.

The Arabic daily *Al Arab Al Yawm* on Thursday published what it described as the IFBB report, in which the federation mentioned that it had disqualified the Jordanian national from his title.

Hassanein loses his title because the Doping Control Committee has confirmed that Hassanein took steroids in big quantities... I hope that it will be a big lesson for all bodybuilders," the IFBB report quoted Weider as saying in the one page show.

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"We're going to continue with the mission exactly as planned regardless of political and diplomatic atmospheres."

Although the Kremlin denied the missile reports, Yeltsin changed track dramatically from the hitherto unconditional line that Russia would not be sucked into the Kosovo conflict.

"We're going to continue with the mission exactly as planned regardless of political and diplomatic atmospheres."

After meeting with Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, the Cypriot said Yugoslavia "cannot resort to any peaceful gestures" in light of the air strikes, which the allies have vowed to continue.

The White House, which has demanded the men's unconditional release, said it was not surprised. "We did not have great expectations" about Kyriakou's effort, deputy press secretary Barry Toliv said.

A hit on Jugopetrol storage depot at Smederevo, 30 kilometers east of Belgrade, ignited an enormous fireball. Dense black smoke engulfed nearby vineyards and fruit

orchards in spring bloom.

NATO jets struck twice late Thursday and early Friday at several targets in Kragujevac, an industrial town 90 kilometers south of Belgrade, targeting the Zastava industrial complex, the state-run Tanjug said. It said 124 people were hurt.

Workers at the plant, Serbia's biggest employer, had earlier organised a human shield to deter NATO bombing.

The Yugoslav army later issued a harsh statement accusing Albania of "aggression" and saying those supporting the KLA would "have to bear the consequences for the eventual fire-up of the war in the Balkans."

NATO leaders, meanwhile, pointed to what they said were air strike successes against Serb police and army units on the ground in Kosovo, which are blamed for many of the alleged atrocities against the province's ethnic Albanians.

Their lines of communication are being cut, their vehicles' assembly areas are being attacked, their supplies are running low and they are taking casualties," Gen. Sir Charles Guthrie, the British chief of defence staff, said Friday.

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The latest wave of allied attacks late Thursday and Friday targeted Yugoslavia's military-industrial plants, fuel depots and communications facilities.

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Prime minister pledges to improve economy, strengthen Arab ties

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JPA criticises Al Arab Al Yawm's move to sack 17 of its employees

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh

AMMAN — The Jordan Press Association (JPA) slammed Al Arab Al Yawm's board of directors for sacking more than a dozen of the daily's employees last week saying it will counter such measures legally to defend their rights and livelihood.

In a letter to the daily's chairman of the board, Riyadh Hroub, the JPA expressed deep concern about and disapproval of the recent firing of the paper's employees saying such actions had been taken before and that Hroub had then personally vowed not to repeat them.

"We hope that this is only a bad rumour, if not the JPA council will counter such unjustifiable measures legally in the defence of their colleagues' rights and livelihood," said the letter on Thursday.

But on Friday evening after a two-hour emergency meeting of the JPA council, it was confirmed that around 17 Al Arab Al Yawm employees had indeed been dismissed.

According to JPA's Deputy President Tareq Momani, the employees

were served notice of their dismissal on Thursday. He said eight of them are journalists.

Momani told the Jordan Times that several of those who were sacked approached the association for help.

The council requested Al Arab Al Yawm's General Manager Adnan Husseini attend the Friday meeting, during which he confirmed the dismissal of the employees saying it fell within an article in the Labour Law concerning "labour organisation."

Husseini told us that the paper was going through a restructuring phase and had demanded the heads of departments recommend the most needed in order to sack the surplus," Momani added.

He said Husseini told them that the 17 were the only group of employees to be sacked from the paper. However, an editor at the daily who requested anonymity, said this was only the first group presented and that there were more to come.

At the end of the meeting, Momani said the council remained unconvinced by Husseini's arguments and

demanded to meet Hroub to reconsider the dismissals.

He said the council will remain on call to pursue the case and will take further measures, including legal action, and sit-ins if Hroub does not respond.

"This is not an individual case, it includes everybody, and we have to teach all media institutions not to resort to such measures against its employees," Momani added.

Journalist and JPA-member Jamal Alawi, who is running for the JPA presidency later this month, said he and many fellow journalists have set up a seven-member defecction committee that includes Lower House Deputies Salameh Hiyari, Mahmoud Kharabshah, Salameh Attiyeh and other journalists to pursue the case on behalf of Al Arab Al Yawm's employees.

"This sort of a problem worries most journalists and newspaper employees, and we want to make sure it does not happen again," said Alawi.

He told the Jordan Times that the committee will hold a meeting Saturday, and that a sit-in in front of the Parliament building by many journalists was arranged for

Sunday.

"Al Arab Al Yawm has set a precedent in sacking its employees and the JPA council has not taken any tough or adequate measures against that, therefore it is my right as well as that of my fellow journalists to fight it," he added.

According to Momani the daily last December sacked around 16 of its 200-journalist employees.

Last February, Hroub also fired the daily's chief editor Saleh Qallab and Taher Adwan, the paper's responsible editor.

Reasons behind the editors' dismissals remain a puzzle to many as well as to the editors themselves, yet speculations centred around personal differences between Qallab and Hroub.

When asked for reasons behind the editors' dismissals, Hroub said it was part of the paper's "internal restructuring process."

Hroub who owns shares in Al Arab Al Yawm, Al Masaiyah, The Arab Daily, and in weeklies Shabab, Al Bilad and Abed Rabbah has been unavailable for comment.

Yeltsin warns of war over Kosovo; new NATO strikes on Good Friday

(Continued from page 1)

Tanjung also reported a total of three daytime detonations southeast and southwest of Pristina, the Kosovo capital. For the first time, no air strikes were reported in Pristina itself overnight.

In a statement, NATO acknowledged that earlier this week, one of its bombs from an attack on the main telephone exchange in Pristina fell short of its target, causing damage to a residential area.

"Despite our very best efforts it appears that on this attack one bomb may have caused some collateral damage," Air Commodore David Wilby told reporters during a briefing at NATO headquarters in Brussels. In Thursday's briefing, Wilby said allied bombing was not responsible for the widespread damage in Pristina, saying this damage was probably orchestrated by the Serbs.

NATO allies have insisted the bombing campaign will continue until Milosevic withdraws Serb special police and Yugoslav army units sent to Kosovo as part of the crackdown.

The allies also say he must also allow all ethnic Albanian refugees to return home and accept a peace plan calling for 28,000 NATO-led troops, including 4,000 Americans, to enforce a peace plan.

greatest mass displacement in half a century.

The U.N. refugee agency, UNHCR, appeared to have solved the mystery of the 10,000 Kosovo Albanian refugees who went missing on Wednesday, saying they had been located in Macedonia and neighbouring Albania.

Canadian Immigration Minister Lucienne Robillard said UNHCR head Sudako Ogata had decided the UNHCR would not need Western nations to take in Kosovo refugees in an airlift at this time, but this could not immediately be confirmed.

Those reaching refuge in neighbouring states have described a systematic campaign of terror by Serb troops and police against ethnic Albanians, who made up 90 per cent of the Serbian province's pre-war population of two million people.

The rebels, however, call that a sham.

Yugoslavia is also urging refugees to return — and chokes off nearly all border escape routes — but Western officials have voiced fears Milosevic wants to use them as human shields against NATO air strikes.

Nearly a half million ethnic Albanians have fled or were driven out of Kosovo since the NATO bombing campaign began March 24, in Europe's

PKK claims bombing, Iranian carried out attack

ANKARA (AFP) — The rebel Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) on Friday claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on a provincial governor in Turkey carried out by an Iranian.

In a statement carried by the pro-Kurdish news agency DEM, the PKK said the bomber was a member of its armed wing, the ARK.

DEM confirmed earlier information from the Turkish army identifying the attacker as a native of Urumieh in northwestern Iran.

The 21st Gendarmerie Division based in Yulusekova, where the attack took place, said the man was named Turab Mohammed.

Two other Iranians and two Turks involved in the attack were arrested, the statement added. It was the first known involvement of foreigners in the attacks that have hit Turkey since the capture of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in February.

The governor of Hakkari province, Nihat Canbolat, escaped Thursday's attempt on his life with minor injuries, but his driver was killed and nine people, five of them civilians, were injured.

The bomber was ripped to shreds by the explosives tied to his body.

It was the third suicide bombing committed by the PKK in Turkey in less than two weeks. Two people including the attacker were killed and 20 injured in an attack on the governor of Bingol province earlier this week. Eleven were injured in a similar attack in Istanbul in late March, in which the bomber died.

Ankara has frequently accused Iran of "closing its eyes" to the infiltration of PKK fighters into Turkey from its territory, a charge Tehran denies.

PKK leader Ocalan in December said the PKK had opened camps in northern Iran after its bases in Syria and Lebanon were closed. Turkey temporarily closed one of its three border gates with Iran on Feb. 22 and evacuated its consulate in Urumieh after a violent Kurdish demonstration there against the capture of Ocalan in which three people were killed.

Prime minister pledges to improve economy, strengthen Arab ties

(Continued from page 1)

Economist Fahed Fanek said Rawabdeh's government is capable of solving the country's economic ills if foreign assistance materialises.

"Depending on our domestic resources our choices will be very few. The government will not be able to face the economic challenges with such resources. Foreign assistance is necessary for the Kingdom," Fanek told the Jordan Times.

The economist and prominent columnist was referring to the promises Jordan received from the United States, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Germany and other countries following the death of King Hussein on Feb. 7.

He said Jordan was likely to receive the financial assistance it was promised from the United States, but he was less optimistic on Jordan's chances of obtaining such aid from the Gulf states.

Fanek said, however, that other forms of assistance that could help the national economy were the opening up of Gulf countries' markets to Jordanian-made products and the employment of more Jordanians in these states.

"Such measures will reduce unemployment, enhance foreign reserves and improve the balance of payment,"

Political Parties Law, whose introduction last year angered the opposition parties, and said that it will implement the law.

The Political Parties Law, which was endorsed during the government of Abdal Salam Majali, raised the minimum number of party members to 500 and conditioned that each party should be able to win at least one seat in parliamentary elections.

Rawabdeh, who was appointed on March 4, said his government will proceed with earlier plans to build Al Wihda Dam with Syria, but added that "financial problems" were hindering the project.

Following the death of King Hussein, Jordan and Syria sent clear signals that they wanted better relations, but further improvement hinges on their ability to balance differences over the Middle East peace process and uneasy links with Turkey and Iran.

The two sides have traded scores of emotionally-charged congratulatory cables on various national occasions, indicating that their fractured ties are on the mend.

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(Continued from page 1)

at Bab Al Salam Palace by Abdul Bari Atwan, King Abdullah reiterated that Jordan will continue to serve as a supporter of the Palestinians in the final status negotiations with Israel and will place its expertise at their disposal.

King Abdullah said he was looking forward to stronger economic cooperation with the West and was waiting for a meeting of the G7 countries early this summer for its results and resolutions.

The King expressed hope

that these countries will "write off a large portion of Jordan's debts because such a decision will help the Kingdom overcome its present economic crisis."

The King said the coming six months are extremely critical and priority is being given to the economy and how to create jobs and meet the Jordanian people's needs.

In reply to whether the late King Hussein had instructed him to take certain political steps, King Abdullah said: "I

was not fortunate enough to be at my father's side for a very long period of time before his death. But I spent time close to him for more than 20 years and from him I have learned a great deal. He was a father and a teacher to me. But in his last moments, he told me, 'My son you have a big heart, so follow your heart because it will never let you down'."

Present at the interview was Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti.

Bodybuilder 'admits' taking banned substance

(Continued from page 1)

Jordan in November, Haseanein received a hero's welcome and met with sport officials headed by then-Minister of Youth and Culture Talal Sata'an Al Hassan and JBBF President Abu Touk.

Haseanein was favoured to clinch the gold medal for Jordan in the upcoming Pan-Arab Games. He will not be allowed to take part in any domestic or international contests if the IFBB proves that he used

banned substances.

Jordan's best achievement in bodybuilding was Haseanein's third place finish in 1994 World Championship held in China.

Last year, Jordan's weightlifting champion Aley Khawaldeh was disqualified from the Asian Games contests held in Bangkok in December after testing positive. Khawaldeh tested positive after setting a new Arab record in the 56-kilogramme class. The

Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) reprimanded the Jordan Olympic Committee after Khawaldeh was found to have taken the diuretic Triamterene in a random test, following which he was immediately disqualified and expelled from the Games Village.

The OCA handed the matter to the sport's governing body to impose an international suspension which will bar him from the Pan-Arab Games.

"Such measures will reduce unemployment, enhance foreign

PRAYER TIMES

03:49 Fajr

05:05 (Sunrise) Duha

11:37 Dhuhr

15:12 'Asr

18:05 Maghreb

19:25 'Isha'

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church

Sweifieh, Tel. 5920740

Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590

Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366

Anglican Church Tel. 4624534/624811

St. Ateni Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751

Amman International Church Tel. 5865897

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404

The Evangelical Local Church

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Moderate to warm weather conditions will prevail with temperatures rising gradually and winds northeasterly to easterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be warm, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min/Max. temp. Amman 06/21 Aqaba 18/26

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'amneh (02) 250080

Fon'd Pharmacy (02) 275360

ZARQA:

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199

WEATHER

AMMAN:

Dr. Farouq Nour 5601179

Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyim 4620115

Dr. Wissam Hazzayn 4748563

Dr. Moustafa Al Qasim 4779999

AMMAN:

Firas Pharmacy 5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730

Mayada Pharmacy 5537004

Rukh Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

HOSPITALS

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Dr. Ghazi Ta'amneh (02) 250080

Fon'd Pharmacy (02) 275360

ZARQA:

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199

Specialty Hospital (02) 7103100

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

06:00 Tel Aviv (RJ)

07:45 Am

GAM halts decision to fell trees for Kashef road expansion

By Dana Charkasi

AMMAN — The Greater Amman Municipality (GAM) said on Friday it had suspended a plan to uproot 56 old pine trees to be able to widen a street in a picturesque and hilly area near Amman after a controversy raised by several residents.

The decision crowned a year-old anti-afforestation campaign by several residents of the Kashef area of Badr Al Jadid, near Maheb — 15 kilometres west of Amman — who offered an alternative to the municipality's plan.

"We have halted the process and we will conduct a new study on the matter in order to re-investigate whether the widening of the street is really necessary," Hussein Al Hamouri, director of the Public Relations department at the GAM, told the Jordan Times.

Residents said earlier

this week that 56 pines had been marked with colour to prepare for their removal to pave the way for plans to widen the street.

"It is a pity to cut down these beautiful old pine trees... they are irreplaceable," said resident Fayed Jaber, who together with others in the neighbourhood, have been trying to avert the GAM plan. "Here in Jordan, we need every single tree."

The trees at stake fall inside the boundaries of a land owned by Jaber.

"As the land right and left of the street belongs to me, I offered to be flexible and spare the trees by detouring or diverting the street a bit to the left or right," Jaber added.

He said at least 40 of the trees could be spared by a minor diversion and through building an island around the trees — a common practice elsewhere in the capital.

Some Kashef residents

said much of the land in the area belongs to a prominent local tribe, whose members favour widening the street to push up real estate prices.

However, the issue highlighted lack of serious popular awareness on nature conservation, including afforestation.

Salem Al Akur, director of the Forestry and Agricultural Resources at the Ministry of Agriculture, told the Jordan Times this week that he was unaware of the Kashef pine tree issue.

"However, our problem is that the Ministry of Agriculture does not participate in the committees that take decisions to open or to widen streets.

These decisions are taken by the Greater Amman Municipality. We wish this system could be changed so that we have the opportunity to participate in this decision-making process."

Court sentences man to death for murder of JVA official

By Rana Husseini

AMMAN — The Criminal Court last week sentenced a 41-year-old man to death after he was found guilty of murdering his boss in Deir Al Aila in November 1998.

The court tribunal found Mohammad Abed, an employee of the Jordan Valley Authority, guilty of murdering Mohammad Habashneh, 48, the assistant to the secretary general of the JVA in his office on Nov. 7.

The same tribunal acquitted a second defendant, Hussein Khatib, of a charge of complicity in premeditated murder, "because of a lack of evidence."

Both defendants pleaded not guilty to the charges in their opening trial in January.

According to court documents, Abed was dismissed from his job upon Habashneh's recommendations, because "the defendant was

not disciplined in his job and used to initiate problems with his fellow employees."

"Because of his poor performance and his repeated violations, the victim transferred him to different departments, and finally recommended that he be dismissed from his job," the charge sheet said.

Abed decided to take revenge, and planned to kill Habashneh, it added.

On the morning of the incident, the charge sheet said, Abed asked his nephew to drive him to the Jordan Valley.

"The defendant entered Habashneh's office, and without saying a word, shot him four times, and left with Mahmoud who was waiting for him in the car," the charge sheet said.

The verdict, handed down by Judges Mohammad Ajarmeh, Mifreh Mubeidin and Issa Hamdan, will automatically be reviewed by the Court of Cassation within 30 days.



Her Majesty Queen Rania holding hands with ethnic Albanian refugee children in this refugee camp outside Skopje on Thursday. Queen Rania travelled with a plane load of aid for refugees who fled the Kosovo crisis (Photo by Reuters)

Queen returns from Kosovo aid mission

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Her Majesty Queen Rania returned home late on Thursday after supervising the distribution of a plane load of relief supplies sent by Jordan to aid ethnic Albanian refugees fleeing Yugoslavia's war-torn Kosovo province.

In her first official foray abroad since she was proclaimed Queen on March 21, Her Majesty spoke of the suffering refugees and the dire need to help them.

"Our visit was not to express any political stand or to support one party against the other," she told journalists after arriving in Amman. "The visit aimed at helping those subjected to the worst treatment."

"I saw the catastrophic situation there... Women

who have become widows, children who have lost their parents and those who are in dire need of medical help. Our duty is to stand by them."

The Hashemite Charitable Organisation for the Kosovo crisis victims, which gathered the aid in implementation of His Majesty King Abdullah's directives, said it was planning to send more assistance.

Queen Rania received the C-130 cargo plane laden with 18,000 tonnes of medical supplies, biscuits, baby milk, blankets and tents at Skopje airport in Macedonia, where many Kosovars have fled.

The aid, worth \$180,000, was donated by individuals and charities.

Religious Affairs Minister

Abdul Salam Abbadi, HRH Prince Ali and HRH Prince Talal were also aboard the plane.

Abdadi said the shipment was the first of several planned for Kosovo refugees in the coming weeks.

"This aid is an expression of support for the people of Kosovo in the tragedy caused by the aggression and practices of the Serbian forces," Abbadi said.

Jordan earlier dispatched its envoy to Yugoslavia in protest of Serb killings in Kosovo and the expulsion of ethnic Albanians.

Many of the 200,000 or so ethnic Albanian refugees on the move are in or heading to Macedonia and Albania.

Deputies head for IPU meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — A Jordanian parliamentary delegation led by the Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Abdul Hadi Majali, left Friday for Brussels to take part in the International Parliamentary Union (IPU) meeting due to open Saturday with the participation of nearly 136 nations.

In a statement before his departure, Majali said the meeting will focus attention on social and political issues plaguing the world as well as human rights and democracy issue.

Majali said he will focus attention in particular on the political and economic developments in the Middle East and the world at large from a Jordanian perspective and will

review stand on the Middle East peace process and the Kingdom's continued efforts to contribute to just and durable peace.

The address will urge the IPU to promote its role in enabling the U.N. to ensure the implementation of resolutions concerning democracy, public freedoms and world peace, according to Majali.

Majali said he will hold side meetings with heads of Arab and foreign parliamentary delegations to explore further cooperation in Middle East peace building. He also said the Jordanian delegation will participate in separate meetings with the Arab parliamentary delegations to coordinate the Arab countries stands.

"We have no political differences with Syria" — Batikhi

AMMAN (J.T.) — The head of the General Intelligence Department, in an unprecedented newspaper interview, said Jordan has no political differences with Syria and is looking forward to strengthening bilateral ties with its northern neighbour.

"We do not consider ourselves as having a political difference with Syria," Samih Batikhi was quoted as saying in an interview with the Saudi Arabian daily *Ukaz* on Wednesday and reprinted by the local daily *Al Aswad* on Thursday.

"But as a matter of fact, Syria at a certain stage in time considered that there was a political difference (with Jordan) over the ... peace treaty with Israel," he added in his first interview with a newspaper since he took office in 1994.

"But at the same time, Syria had distinguished ties with Egypt after the signing of Camp David peace treaty with Israel (in 1979) and we used to ask as to the cause for the estrangement in (Jordanian-Syrian) ties."

Officials said recent Jordanian-Syrian gestures of goodwill following the death of His Majesty King Hussein indicate that fractured bilateral

ties are on the mend after they hit a record low following the signing of Jordan's own 1994 peace treaty with Israel.

Syrian President Hafez Al Assad made a surprise visit to Jordan to attend the funeral of King Hussein on Feb. 8, 1999.

"We look forward to an era of brotherly ties. We also hope to see the end of complications connected with security issues"

ing foot in Amman for the first time since 1994.

He also sent his son, Bashar — being groomed to run Syria in the future — to meet His Majesty King Abdullah and to condole him over the death of his father who ruled Jordan for 47 years.

King's visit and before King Abdullah ascended to the throne. However, the hospitality accorded to us in Saudi Arabia and King Fahd's reception of King Abdullah upon his arrival... are unprecedented by all standards," Batikhi said.

"We felt that this hospitality exceeded all our expectations and aspirations... What we saw exceeded brotherly commitment and mere backing for King Abdullah and Jordan in general. This has brought to us deep satisfaction."

Asked how King Abdullah's planned visit to Syria, Batikhi said, "we look forward to an era of brotherly ties. We also hope to see the end of complications connected with security issues."

King Abdullah's visit to Saudi Arabia last week further cemented bilateral ties that have gradually returned to their pre-Gulf crisis levels of warmth. Jordan angered Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states by its perceived support for Baghdad during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis, caused by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

"Relations with Saudi Arabia are very strong and marked by a brotherly spirit. They were so even before the especially as the late King Hussein had called for a comprehensive revision," Batikhi said.

"The changes, as understood by the King, aim to inject young and fresh blood into the administration for the sake of overcoming problems and to attain further progress and prosperity for Jordanians," he explained.

"It has been reassured that there will be no changes in Jordan's political and principled stands. The new era is an extension of that which prevailed under King Hussein's reign, while executive authority is exercised through the King's appointed government in a manner that ensures continuity towards the achievement of what is best for the Kingdom."

Batikhi said he hoped to see "a higher level of (security) cooperation" between Jordan and its Arab and Gulf Arab neighbours.

"However, Jordan's security cooperation with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council is very good and we are satisfied with it. It is truly a cooperation between brothers."

What's Going On

AMMAN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

"Backa" Theatre Production, "Children and Youth" at Osama Machini Theatre at 6:00 p.m.
 Workshop entitled "Technical Elements in the Theatre" at the Royal Cultural Centre (10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. (The workshop will continue on Sunday 11 April 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.)

Workshop entitled "Creative Writing for Theatre" by Lena Verzla Findell at Tyche Hotel (10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.)

"Love in Autumn" (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 9:00 p.m.

SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDY

Shakespeare's comedy "Kings and Clowns" at the Inter-Continental Hotel on Sunday and Monday April 11-12 at 8:30 p.m.

LECTURE

"Museums and Art in Jordan: A Personal Journey" by Dr. Carol Malt at Darat Al Funun; Jafar Weibdeh at 6:00 p.m.

APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE

The Batikhi family

extends its appreciation and gratitude to their excellencies, the heads and members of the foreign diplomatic corps in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

for expressing their sympathy over the passing of Tayseer Batikhi

Your condolences have been of great comfort to us in our bereavement.

Li-Sharif talks build on close Pakistan-China ties

ISLAMABAD (AP) — China's number two leader Li Peng held talks with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif here Friday on cooperation between their closely allied countries, officials said.

Sources said the talks, which lasted more than an hour, covered economic, political and regional and international issues and matters relating to peace and regional security.

Representatives of the two later signed agreements to promote bilateral cooperation but details were not given.

Sharif later hosted a lunch for Li who was also scheduled to call on President Muhammad Rafiq Tarar, officials said.

Li, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC), arrived Thursday for a visit that officials said forms part of high level exchanges between mainly Muslim Pakistan and Communist China, who have shared years of cooperation in economic and defence related areas.

They said the visit was important as it followed nuclear tests by Pakistan last May, in response to

similar detonations by rival India.

China has provided Pakistan with a 300 megawatt nuclear power plant and its collaboration has helped Pakistan in manufacturing Super-7 fighter aircraft and battle tanks.

Li, who pledged on arrival that China would further cement relations with Pakistan despite the changing international situation and make new contributions for peace and stability in the region.

China will take "all round cooperation to a new level," he said in a speech at a dinner hosted by Pakistani National Assembly's Speaker Elahi Bakhsh Soomro.

"China will remain a trustworthy friend of Pakistan no matter what changes may take place in the regional and international situation," Li said.

"We will further strengthen our cooperation with Pakistan in international affairs, and make new contributions to peace and stability in our region and the world at large," he said.

"The profound changes in the international situation have brought us both

precious opportunities and serious challenges.

"Both being developing nations, China and Pakistan are faced with an arduous task of maintaining stability, developing the economy and improving people's living standards," the Chinese leader said.

Li, a former premier and still number two in the Beijing hierarchy behind President Jiang Zemin, arrived from Damascus on a five-day visit.

Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz and Senate chairman Wasim Sajid will meet the Chinese parliamentary chief on Saturday, officials said.

"China and Pakistan enjoy time-tested and friction-free relations," Information Minister Mushahid Hussain said. The visit will provide a "solid and substantive basis" to further cement friendship, he said on the eve of Li's visit.

Sharif visited China last year and Chinese Defence Minister General Chi Haotian visited Pakistan in February to reassure

China's cooperation to

Pakistan in maintaining a strategic balance.

Chairman of China's National People's Congress Li Peng (center) walks with Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (right) in Islamabad April 9. Li Peng held talks with Premier Sharif, focusing on regional and bilateral issues (Reuters photo)



China human rights boss defends Tiananmen killings

BEIJING (R) — The head of a Chinese government-backed human rights body on Friday defended Beijing's 1989 crackdown on mass pro-democracy demonstrations, calling the protesters "flies and mosquitoes" who had bitten the government.

"We forgot to prepare flyswatters," said Zhu Muzhi, president of the China Society for Human Rights Studies, referring to the lack of rubber bullets, tear gas and other riot gear to quell the demonstrations.

The student-led protests centred on Beijing's Tiananmen Square were crushed by army tanks backed by troops with machine-guns on June 4, 1989. Hundreds died and many were jailed.

Zhu, who had served as a government spokesman after the crackdown, said he saw rioters pelt rocks at soldiers who did not fight back and set fire to an army truck.

"One soldier was thrown off a bridge," said Zhu, also a former minister of culture and president of the state news agency Xinhua. "The mob chased (him) down and

killed him." Zhu said the government had been patient but was "forced to shoot demonstrators in the end".

"We were bitten," Zhu said. "There was a boil. There was no other way but to have it surgically removed."

"Facts prove that the method used in the past cured the disease. It is not necessary to rethink whether another method could have been used," he said.

Zhu said that if the protests had not been crushed, China would have plunged into turmoil. "The people would have stood up," he said. "The past 10 years would not have been easy to pass by."

Police have constantly harassed bereaved families, demonstrators who had been wounded and pro-democracy activists campaigning for a reassessment of the crackdown.

Zhu said the protests aimed to overthrow the government, not merely denounce widespread corruption and galloping inflation.

The 1989 protests are officially labelled a counter-revolutionary rebellion aimed at toppling the government.

— Fourteen Japanese buyers gathered at a country club here Friday to bid on 13.8 tonnes of elephant tusks in the first legal sale of ivory since an international ban imposed in 1989.

The one-time sale is the first by Namibia, Zimbabwe and Botswana, which were granted permission Feb. 12 by a U.N. body to dispose of elephant tusk stockpiles.

The go-ahead by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) provoked criticism by some conservationists, who fear the sale would promote poaching.

Zhao was sacked in 1989 for sympathising with student demonstrators. He lives under virtual arrest in Beijing.

Last month, Zhao's former secretary, Bao Tong, the most senior official to be jailed over the crackdown, called for Beijing to reverse its "wrongful assessment" of the protests.

Zhu said China's human rights record was not perfect, but that in a country of 1.2 billion people, the right to survive prevailed over political rights in the minds of the masses.

Amstrong said that if there is any evidence in an upsurge of poaching because of the sale, future such auctions would be ruled out.

Namibia auctions first ivory since 1989 ban

WINDHOEK, Namibia (AP) —

Namibia's environment ministry's chief elephant expert.

Nearly every tusk sold can be traced to individual elephants that died over the last 15 years. Another 28 tonnes of ivory confiscated from poachers and smugglers remain under lock and key in a government vault elsewhere in Windhoek. Lindeque declined to comment on the potential value of the ivory stockpile, but at the time of the ban, ivory was selling for \$300 per kilogramme.

On Thursday, the Japanese buyers inspected the lots. Most of the 14 buyers represent traditional "hanko" carving businesses in Japan, which create elaborate signature seals from the malleable ivory for wealthy clients. Japan is the leading consumer of ivory.

The ban will remain in effect after the sales, said Jim Armstrong, deputy secretary-general of Geneva-based CITES.

Amstrong said that if there is any evidence in an upsurge of poaching because of the sale, future such auctions would be ruled out.

Russian journalist says he doesn't expect fair trial

Vладивосток, Russia (AP) — A Russian military journalist accused of revealing secrets about Russia's navy said Friday he believed that the trial against him was being rigged by people intent on keeping him behind bars.

Naval Capt. Grigory Pasko is charged with treason and espionage and could face up to 20 years in prison if convicted, but details of the precise charges have not been made public.

The case is being heard in secret by the navy's Pacific Fleet court in the eastern port city of Vladivostok.

"I am not expecting that the trial will be fair," Pasko said before a court session Friday, according to the Interfax news agency.

"Everything indicates that it will be a sham, not a proper trial. The true criminals are at large, doing everything to prevent me from being released, even though there is every reason for that," Pasko said.

Pasko, a reporter for the Pacific

Fleet newspaper *Boevaya Vakhta* (combat vigil), did freelance work for a Japanese television station, NHK, providing information about waste dumping by the Pacific Fleet.

He was arrested in Vladivostok in 1997, and has been imprisoned since then. Prosecutors have only said he divulged information about the combat readiness of the fleet.

Pasko's lawyers have repeatedly claimed he was charged in revenge for exposing environmental damage inflicted by the fleet.

Defense lawyers said Thursday that they are considering cutting down their witness list because testimony made by more than 30 witnesses from the prosecutor's side wasn't substantive enough to counter.

The court has decided to call three Japanese journalists to testify in Pasko's trial, but defense lawyer Oleg Kotyayev said Friday they were unlikely to come to Russia to appear in court, Interfax reported.

Malaysia says viral outbreak contained

KUALA LUMPUR (AP) — Malaysia announced Friday that it has contained a deadly viral outbreak that claimed the lives of more than 100 people and crippled its once-prosperous pig industry.

But even as Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who heads the viral task force, announced that the virus had been contained, there were conflicting reports on the number of deaths it caused.

Abdullah said the two suspected killer viruses believed to spread from pigs to humans were no longer wreaking havoc in the central state of Negeri Sembilan and several other parts of the country.

"It can be said that we have achieved success and the outbreak has been contained," he told reporters at a press conference that was closed to the foreign media.

On Friday, the government also banned the transport of pigs across state borders to prevent infected

hogs from spreading the viruses. So far, soldiers have destroyed more than 700,000 pigs out of a targeted 1 million.

The unprecedented six-month viral outbreak has thrown the southeast Asian nation into confusion. Pig farmers abandoned their bones in February after health officials warned that they could be bitten by the culex mosquito, which carries the Japanese encephalitis virus, originally thought to be the culprit.

Workers in piggeries and abattoirs are highly at risk, but there is so far no evidence of transmission from person to person or from eating cooked pork, the WHO regional office said in a statement Friday.

It said that there have been 11 confirmed cases, including one death, in Singapore. All the victims were abattoir workers who had contact with pigs from Malaysia.

Symptoms are the same: high fever, aches, eventual coma and death.

CDC spokesman Tom Skinner told the Associated Press on Thursday that the virus had never been seen before and that researchers were still struggling with a

means to treat its victims.

In Manila, the regional office of the World Health Organization said that based on human cases under treatment, the incubation period for the virus ranges from four to 18 days, with the first symptom being a severe headache.

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The mysterious virus, which resembles the very rare Hendra virus first detected in Australia in 1994, has claimed more than two-thirds of the total number of victims — a figure which is also in dispute.

Thursday's weekly report

by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that 111 Malaysians have been killed by the viral outbreak, while news reports said there were as many as 117 deaths.

The tally on the government's official 24-hour hotline remains 92, far below the estimates by the CDC, which has sent nine scientists here to assist local health officials.

Also Friday, the veterinary department said it sent 1,400 blood samples from horses belonging to the Malaysian racing association to the Australian animal house laboratory in Geelong, Australia for screening.

If the horses are infected, they may have to be destroyed, said the department's director-general, Mohd Nordin Mohd Nor.

The department has banned all movement of horses and directed all establishments and individuals to screen all horses for the Hendra-like virus.

NEWS IN BRIEF

11 held in Sri Lanka's biggest kidnapping for ransom case

COLOMBO (AP) — A police officer and 10 others were arrested and most of the ransom money was recovered in Sri Lanka's biggest kidnapping for ransom case, police said Friday. A police officer, three military deserters and seven others have been arrested in the past week and 17 million others have been arrested in the past week and 17 million rupees (\$261,000) recovered in the March 31 kidnapping of a company director. The director was released a day later when his wife paid the ransom money, said police officer Nuwan Wedasinghe. The kidnapper, who included a police officer, stopped G.C. Wickremasinghe's vehicle at a Colombo's posh golf club and took him and the driver to a hide-out in the suburbs. They then called the tycoon's wife and threatened to kill him if she did not pay the ransom. They released his driver later. The wife raised money through her relatives and paid the ransom later. She then alerted the police. The family also gave police the number on the currency notes they paid as ransom. Police informed all banks about the numbers. Earlier this week, a bank manager near Colombo noticed a deposit made with the same notes and called the police. The man was arrested and following information given by him all the others were held.

Japanese navy officer found hanged after exam scandal

TOKYO (AP) — The Japanese navy found a senior officer hanged on a warship on Friday, officials said, as the military prepared to investigate a promotion examinations scandal. The officer of the Maritime Self-Defense Force was found hanging early Friday in a helicopter hanger on the escort vessel *Sayuki*, now anchored at the port of the northern Japanese city of Mutsu, a spokesman said. The officer was unconscious at the scene but died at a hospital later. He apparently "committed suicide," the spokesman said, adding the force was yet to find the motive. "We also refrain from disclosing the officer's name by considering his bereaved family's feelings," he said. The suicide came on the eve of the launch of an investigation committee on suspected wrongdoings at last month's promotion tests in which the dead officer served as an examiner. "Several senior officers are suspected of having tipped off correct answers to subordinates at the examinations," the spokesman said.

South African who shot gorilla gets 40 years

JOHANNESBURG (R) — A South African man who shot a gorilla while fleeing from police has been sentenced to 40 years in prison. South African radio said on Friday, Max the gorilla, a star attraction at Johannesburg zoo, became a folk hero in crime-ridden South Africa in July 1997 after he helped police to capture Isaac Mofokeng. Mofokeng ran blindly into Max's den while being pursued by police after he tried to break into a nearby home. Max pinned the fugitive against the wall of his enclosure and kept guard even after Mofokeng shot him in the chest. During his trial, Mofokeng said Max had bitten him on the buttocks. "I thought my last hour had come," he said. Mofokeng, a former policeman, was found guilty on 10 of the 11 charges he faced for various crimes, including rape and housebreaking. The South African broadcasting corporation said his 40-year prison sentence included five years for malicious injury to the gorilla.

One dies in bitter battle between student organisations

KARACHI (AP) — Students armed with chains, broken bottles and iron rods fought a bitter battle at Karachi University Friday killing one student and injuring several others, police said. They said members of rival student organisations fought for about 45 minutes, before police and university security guards intervened. Classes were temporarily suspended. One student died after being beaten with an iron rod, police said. Police are conducting an investigation, and so far say they do not know what caused the fight involving members of the Islamic conservative Islami Jamiat-e-Tulabai and the Punjabi Student Association. More than 10,000 students are enrolled at Karachi University located on the northern edge of the city.

Protest demonstration spins out of control, killing 2 policemen

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — A protest demonstration spun out of control Friday leaving two policemen dead and six other policemen seriously injured, officials said. They said hundreds of people organised a protest in Michni, some 25 kilometres west of Peshawar, to protest a government decision to amalgamate their remote region with a nearby municipality. Several of the protesters were armed and when police tried to break up the demonstration they apparently opened fire on police, police officials said. There were reports of return fire from the police, but it was not immediately clear whether any of the demonstrators were killed or injured. The protest began after the government announced it would amalgamate 44 villages in the remote northeastern Pakistan with nearby Charsadda district. Previously these villages were aligned to the tribal region of Pakistan, an area where tribal law is supreme. The government of Pakistan's authority often is challenged in the tribal region and generally loses out to tribal authority. In the tribal belt most people are heavily armed and laws are made and enforced according to the dictates of tribal elders. Police said they were investigating the shooting incident, but so far there were no reports of arrests having been made.

Separatist group in southern Thailand blamed for explosion

BANGKOK (AP) — An explosion outside a shop in Thailand on Friday was the work of Muslim separatists, a report by TV said. No injuries were reported. An extortion letter found at the site of the blast in Chiang Narathiwat province, 1,140 kilometres south of Bangkok, was signed by two leading members of the New Pala, a separatist group active in Thailand's four southernmost provinces, the report by TV said. It reported that police found the letter, which threatened the shop owner with death if he did not pay 300,000 baht (\$8,020). The explosion did minor damage to the shop's gate and a building across the street, TV reported. Several small groups in southern Thailand engage in sporadic terrorism, ostensibly most provinces have a Muslim, mostly Malay, majority while the rest of the country is overwhelmingly Buddhist.



CONTRACT KILLING — Police officers stand around the body of Gennady Tuganov, a nationalist politician who was gunned down in an apparent contract killing in St. Petersburg on Friday, according to a news report. Tuganov, who ran the St. Petersburg branch of the ultranationalist Liberal Democratic Party, was shot eight times in the head as he entered his apartment, the Interfax news agency said. He died on the spot. Officials with LDP were quoted by Interfax as saying that the killing was probably a contract hit aimed at stopping Tuganov's "political and public activities." Police were investigating the case, but so far no suspects have been found. Scores of gangland assassinations are reported across Russia every year, but the killers usually escape and authorities rarely make any progress in the cases. St. Petersburg has grown into a particularly crime-ridden city even by Russian standards in recent months, with a number of apparent contract hits against business people and politicians (Reuters photo)

Indianapolis men protest treatment in Zimbabwe prison

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Three Americans arrested on allegations of spying, terrorism and sabotage are being held alone in windowless cells and are forced to sleep naked, shackled in leg irons, under continuous electric lighting, their lawyer said.

Attorney Jeremy Callow said the three Indianapolis men, arrested on weapons charges March 7 at Harare's main airport, also were denied daily exercise in the yard at Chikurubi maximum security prison.

"Such circumstances constitute unlawful solitary confinement and punishment," Callow told Harare magistrate Weston Nyamwanza.

He said prison conditions endured by John Lamont Dixon, 39, Gary George Blanchard, 34, and Joseph Wendell Pentjoh, 35, were "inhuman and degrading" and breached Zimbabwe's constitutional provisions on rights of prisoners awaiting

trial.

Zimbabwean authorities allege the men spied on Congolese forces and their allies, including Zimbabwean troops, fighting against rebels backed by Rwanda and Uganda in the 8-month Congo civil war.

Saying they are missionaries, the men were allowed to speak only with the prison chaplain or their lawyer. The largest of the three cells was 4.5 metres by 1.5 metres and each was lit around the clock, leading to disorientation. The men's wrist-watches had been confiscated.

Prison authorities and police also failed to arrange a lineup of interrogating officers enabling the three to pick out officers they allege tortured them.

A defense request for the lineups was granted by another magistrate on March 26.

The men allege they were beaten on the soles of their feet, assaulted and subjected to electric shocks and near-suffocation torture for six days after their arrest.

In an expanded document

not eased.

Nyamwanza noted the complaints and remanded the three to reappear in court April 23.

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In an expanded document

alleging torture submitted to the court on Friday, Blanchard testified he was also made to remove his trousers and act as if having sex with his wife. He was told his wife would be brought to Zimbabwe and "cut open."

Pentjoh said interrogators threatened to gouge out his eyes, shoot him or hand him over to the Congolese government, making a phone call in his presence arranging a flight to Congo.

As a result, he made a false admission, he said in written testimony.

He was further told Blanchard and Dixon were in the "deep freeze" and assumed they had been killed. One of the interrogators told him: "I hate white men. They killed my father."

The Americans face a maximum penalty of life imprisonment on weapons possession charges alone.

At least two reported dead as fresh rioting breaks out in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — At least two people were reportedly killed in a fresh outbreak of riots between Christians and Muslims on Friday in eastern Indonesia.

One person was killed in the town of Amahai on Seram island and the other died in Tual city on Kei Kecil island, according to local police and the official Antara news agency.

Both areas are located in Maluku province, some 2,800 kilometres east of Jakarta, the Indonesian

capital.

In Tual, a man disembarking from a ship was beheaded, while another man was severely injured, local police said.

The cause of death in the other killing was not immediately known.

Meanwhile, Antara reported at least 12 partially decomposed bodies of people believed to have been killed last week were found in a village on Kei Kecil island.

The death toll from the unrest in southern Maluku

which began late last month now totals at least 103 people. The troubled district is part of an area once known as the Spice Islands which has been hit by a wave of religious rioting since January.

The center of the violence has been in the provincial capital of Ambon, where at least 200 people have died. The military has sent about 6,000 troops to the province, one-sixth of which were dispatched to Southeast Maluku.

Family planning experts, for their part, warned that the chances of being able to time a birth to an exact date were very slim.

"We have got enough unplanned pregnancies in this country. The decision shouldn't be taken because there is a cash incentive."

A spokeswoman for the British Pregnancy Advisory Service said that even a fertile couple who had sex Saturday at a fertile time in a woman's cycle only stood a one in four chance of conceiving, and 20 per cent of conceptions ended spontaneously in miscarriage.

"How far will this go?

Will women who sign up to TV companies and sponsors be asked to have a caesarean to make sure they have their baby on January 1?" a church spokeswoman asked.

Family planning experts, for their part, warned that the chances of being able to time a birth to an exact date were very slim.

"We are already overstretched and have shortages of both nurses and midwives."

"We have got enough unplanned pregnancies in this country. The decision shouldn't be taken because there is a cash incentive."

The Church of England, meanwhile, condemned what it termed a media "hype" and said it was worried at the lengths that couples would go to in a bid to get the glare of publicity.

"How far will this go?

"To time a birth with that degree of accuracy is something that is fraught with problems," she said.

"I think the notion that the whole nation is going to be barking tomorrow night in order to have a bay on a certain day is absurd."

"Of course there will be a minority of people who may think they could gain financially out of having a millennium baby — but they obviously have a problem anyway."

The millennium baby craze has been fuelled by media publicity, with television channels preparing special hospital transmissions in search of the first

Parliament puts off final decision on Yeltsin impeachment

MOSCOW (AP) — Parliament on Friday put off a final decision on when to open an impeachment debate against President Boris Yeltsin, which is tentatively set to begin April 15.

Gennady Seleznyov, the speaker of parliament's lower house, told lawmakers that Yeltsin suggested on Friday that the impeachment debate be delayed. But Yeltsin spokesman Dmitry Yakushev countered the claim, saying the president does not want the impeachment vote postponed.

Pro-government lawmakers proposed delaying the impeachment debate, set to begin next Thursday.

But parliament, dominated by hardliners bent on Yeltsin's ouster, decided that it needed more time to consider the issue and will vote next week on whether to delay an impeachment debate.

The impeachment motion is considered a long-shot.

but Yeltsin's frequent illnesses and Russia's economic crisis have weakened his power and made his ouster more likely than it once was.

The motion must win a two-thirds majority in both houses of parliament and approval by Russia's highest courts. The upper house, the Federation Council, has been more supportive of Yeltsin than the lower house.

A Duma panel has charged Yeltsin with instigating the 1991 Soviet collapse, improperly using force against hard-line lawmakers in 1993, launching a botched war in Chechnya, bringing the nation's military to ruin and waging genocide against the Russian people by pursuing economic policies that impoverished the country.

The charges were initiated by the Communists and other hardliners, but the Liberal Yabloko Faction said it would back

impeachment on one count — launching the 1994-96 war in Chechnya.

Yeltsin said on Friday that he wasn't going to introduce an state of emergency, ban the Communist party or fire Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov — all rumours that had been circulating in parliament on Friday.

"We can't ban the Communist Party," Yeltsin said in the Kremlin. "This will backfire, because Russian people are quick to feel pity for victims of oppression." He also denied that his meeting on Thursday with former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin signalled a plan to bring him back to replace Primakov.

"Don't believe these rumours about my plans to fire Primakov," he said. "It's nothing but the speculation and rumour. I believe that Primakov is useful at this stage, and later we shall see." Yeltsin also used the occasion to try to con-

vince the regional leaders, who are all members of the parliament's upper house, to fire Prosecutor General Yuri Skuratov when they debate his resignation again on April 21.

Skuratov has been investigating alleged Kremlin corruption, and Yeltsin tried to fire him in February. The upper house refused to sanction the ouster at the time.

State television ran a video that showed a man who appeared to be Skuratov having sex with two women identified as prostitutes. Yeltsin then suspended Skuratov, who submitted his resignation a second time. The house must again decide whether to accept it.

"It's a shame and disgrace for Russia to have such a prosecutor," Yeltsin said. "You must take a clear position to put an end to this scandal. You mustn't act like last time ... when you failed to support the president."

India's embattled Hindu nationalists court allies

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's ruling Hindu nationalists on Friday won minor opposition groups in a desperate bid to cling to power, as cracks grew in their fragile coalition government.

Officials said Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's BJP party was trying to lure at least three small parties — with 15 seats between them — into supporting the coalition in the event of a no-confidence vote in parliament.

Vajpayee's 13-month-old multi-party coalition has barely 280 members in the 545-seat parliament. It will lose its tenuous majority if a key ally — the AIADMK with 18 MPs — quits the coalition.

The DMK, another regional party with six members of parliament, admitted Friday that BJP strategists had approached its leaders for support.

The DMK's Murasoli Maran, however, refused to give details. He also declined to predict the outcome of the battle of wits raging between the ruling coalition and opposition.

"We don't know whether it will be a Greek tragedy or (have) a happy ending," Maran said. "Why should we say anything which can strengthen the bargaining position of some political leaders?"

BJP officials said they were also talking to the INDL regional party which boasts only four seats and quit the coalition three months ago.

Referring to the influence of Hindu fundamentalist groups on the government, the statement said Vajpayee's BJP had failed to escape "the dark shadow of bairdiners who sought to take India back to the medieval period."

Significantly, however, the statement stopped short of announcing the party's total withdrawal of support for the coalition.

Meanwhile, BJP spokesman J.P. Mathur tried a new tack in his party's war of words with the opposition Congress, warning that a fresh coalition made up of opposition parties would spell economic ruin.

"If our opponents succeed, they won't be able to manage the situation," Mathur said. "The economic stability and progress we gave to the nation will be in doubt."

A.B. Bardhan, chief of the Communist Party of India, told AFP his party was prepared to support a Congress-led government to replace Vajpayee's administration.

"The government is on its way out. The fall is imminent. We have to work out

the contours of an alternative government so that the country is not subjected to expensive mid-term elections," he said.

The Congress and the Communists have a traditionally adversarial relationship but their mutual antipathy for Vajpayee's Hindu-nationalist BJP party has proved a stronger binding force.

Bardhan's statement came three days after India's main communist party — the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) — announced its backing for a Congress bid for power.

CPI-M leader Harkishan Singh Surjeet is widely believed to be helping Congress coordinate its strategy for the coming months.

The Asian Age daily on Friday quoted an unidentified top civil servant who scoffed at the government's continued show of bravado in the face of the deepening crisis.

"It's exactly like when the Titanic was hit by an iceberg. The plates are all laid out, the crockery is on the table," he said.



Two polar bears play at their enclosure on a warm day at the Cologne zoo April 9. Weather forecast reports warm weather for the upcoming weekend in Germany (Reuters photo)

Jordan Times

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Collective remedy

THE FACT that Prime Minister Abdur-Rauf S. Rawabdeh and his government received an unprecedented strong vote of confidence Thursday when 66 deputies stood in favour of his platform does not mean that the road ahead will be strewn with roses. The coming days are the time when the premier's Cabinet will have to roll up their sleeves and translate their policy statement into deeds.

The prime minister has already conceded that economic growth is projected to drop to about 3 per cent. With such a dire prediction, the solution to the high unemployment crisis and rampant poverty, the hallmarks of the government's goals will not be easy. It is no accident that His Majesty King Abdullah's first step in the wake of the overwhelming vote of confidence in Rawabdeh and his team was to call on him to translate into actions what the letter of designation had outlined in great detail and what the government's platform pledged to the country.

It is obvious that no government can on its own carry out all that needs to be done in the upcoming months. The people of Jordan are also called upon to implement their share of the responsibility with each sector according to its capabilities and duties. The kind of free economy and privatisation that we have painted for ourselves requires the full participation of the private sector in uplifting the national economy from its current stagnation. True capital investment needs a certain favourable climate which the government promised to create. But once the government has done its share of the burden and established the appropriate climate for investment, it becomes the responsibility of the private sector to reciprocate by expressing its vote of confidence in its own way.

The public at large also has its share of the burden. Whether wage earners or salaried employees, it is the public who determine the course of the national market. In the final analysis, it is the consumers who cast the ultimate vote of confidence. That is why we all have to pitch in and work in concert to make the future brighter and more productive.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Rai's Taher Adwan commented on the Lower House of Parliament's decision to give the vote of confidence to the government, saying it is a Constitutional necessity and a green light to the Cabinet to go ahead with its plans. However, Adwan added, every Jordanian government needs the people's confidence to remain in authority, as the parliamentary vote of confidence does not mean that the government will rule for two or four years. Although only the King can designate or dismiss governments, there is a relation between the King and the people, which determines whether the government will continue or not, said the writer. Although it is not easy to satisfy all people, the government should obtain the confidence of Jordanians, who are aware of the current challenges and that there are no magical solutions, said the writer adding that if the government succeeds in managing the Kingdom's affairs and combating corruption, it will win people's confidence. Finally, Adwan concluded, criticism, which is a motivation for the government to tackle obstacles, must not paralyse officials' performance and their ability to work on solutions to pressing problems.

Al Rai's Fahed Faneck said that while Israel receives 90 per cent of one million Christian pilgrims visiting the Holy Lands annually from the US and Europe, Jordan is limited to 10 per cent despite the many attractive tourist sites in the Kingdom. Faneck noted that in the year 2000, the number of pilgrims will increase to at least 4 million, which should boost the tourism industry in the country. Jordan is preparing for the event, especially after the discovery of the baptism site east of the Jordan River, which has been authenticated by the Pope, according to the writer. Israel has always been promoting a site located south of Lake Tiberias, which was visited by 400,000 tourists a year. But now Jordan is expected to receive tens of thousands of tourists, thanks to Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Aqel Bilqissi's efforts to put the Kingdom on the 2000 tourist map, said Faneck. Tourism, which is an exporting industry, represents Jordan's "oil," and it provides the country with \$750 million annually, more than the exports of the phosphate and potash industries put together, according to Faneck. This amount can easily be doubled if the country concentrates efforts for that purpose, and is now more practical because of the increasing numbers of hotels in Amman and other places. The year 2000 provides an excellent tourist opportunity, will Jordan meet this challenge, asked Faneck.

Predetermining the outcome of the peace process

Jordanian Perspective



Dr. Musa Keilani

ISRAELIS ARE accusing the European Union (EU) of prejudging the outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process by subscribing to the Palestinian right to set up an independent statehood. They also cite a million reasons why the EU adopted that much-welcome statement endorsing the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people, and contend that the Europeans contradicted themselves by urging both sides not to predetermine the shape of a peace agreement. Furthermore, they assert that it was diplomatically illogical on the part of the Europeans to support the Palestinian quest for statehood.

The Israeli position is at best an assumed posture. If anyone could be accused of contradicting the basic tenets of the peace process or of trying to predetermine its outcome, no party but Israel fits the bill. But the diplomatic charade continues, as far as the politicians there are concerned. It is very much the central theme of the Israeli political approach to the peace process. They know very well that none of their governments had any intention ever of granting the Palestinians their rights. For those who sat down in Madrid, the peace process was a smokescreen for Israel's adminis-

tion into the Middle Eastern order. As far they were concerned, the negotiations could be dragged out for decades, as former prime minister Shimon Peres admitted, with Israel giving very little to the Palestinians for the next century. Their successors have only slightly moderated this approach, but not without ensuring that the Palestinians get only what Israel wants to give them. Wasn't that predetermining the outcome of the peace process on the part of Israel?

For those moderates who succeeded the hardline camp which led Israel to Madrid, the Oslo agreement offered an excellent cover: Bring the Palestinians into an agreement tailored to suit Israeli interests. Use whatever diplomatic, military and political jargon to lead the Palestinians by the nose. After all, beggars can't be choosers, and in Israeli eyes the Palestinians, and the Arabs at large, are indeed at the begging end of this equation, if only because of the military might of the Israelis. They should get only what Netanyahu wants them to have, negotiations or no negotiations. Wasn't that predetermining the outcome of the peace process on the part of Israel?

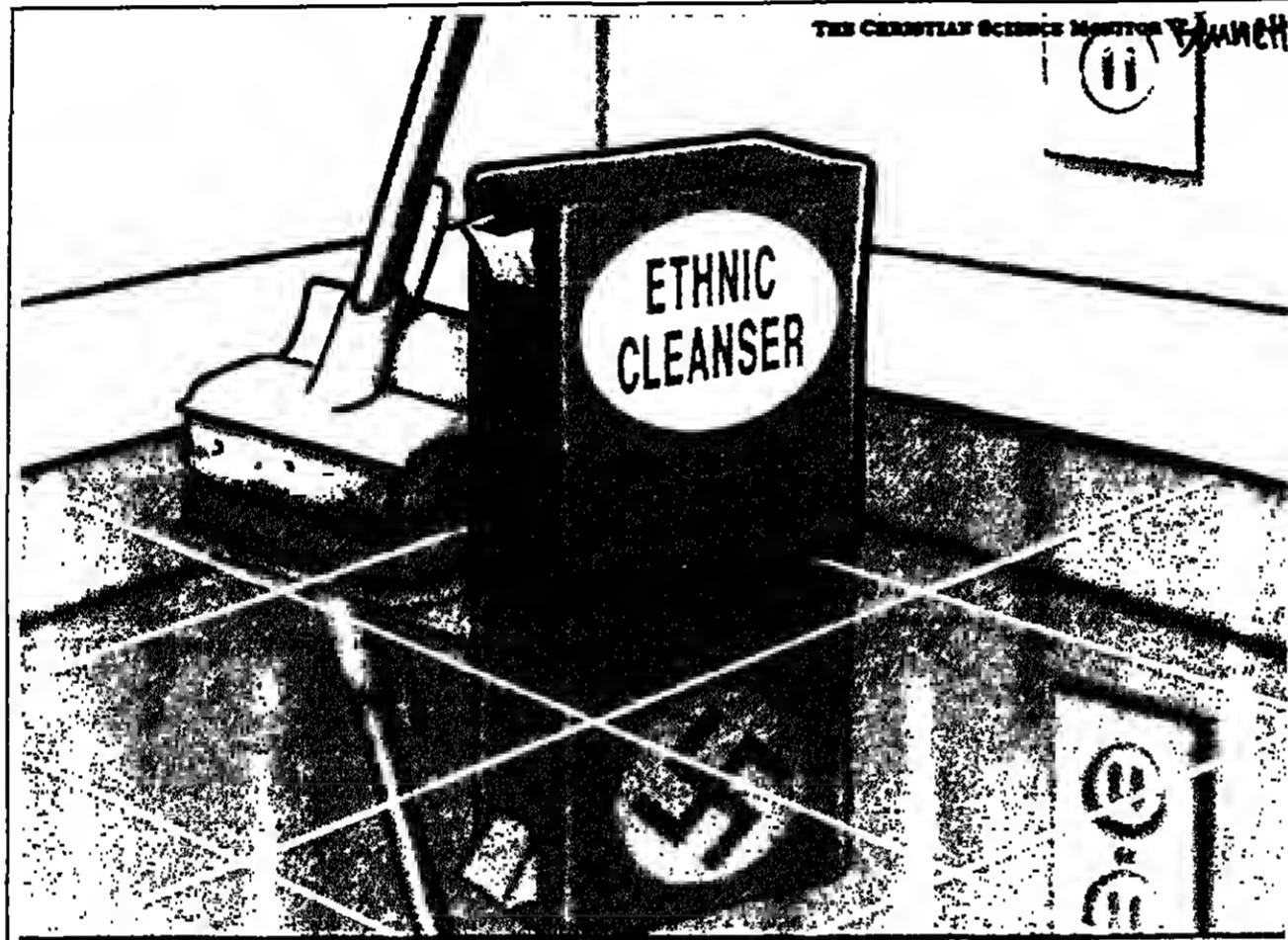
The carefully-measured "mili-

tary redeployment" in the West Bank so far has clearly pointed to a dedicated Israeli drive to ensure that the Palestinians are denied a physically viable, contiguous territorial entity which they could pronounce as the independent state of Palestine. Today, what we find on the West Bank is a Swiss cheese formula of Palestinian population centres separated by Israeli-controlled highways and access roads with Jewish settlements placed in strategic locations. The idea is clear: Israel retains and will continue to retain movements between the Palestinian population centres, and, by extension, will deny Palestinian territorial continuity. Wasn't that predetermining the outcome of the peace process on the part of Israel?

In the Oslo accord, both sides agreed not to undertake any move in Arab east Jerusalem that might change the realities on the ground. What we find today is the continuation of a systematic Israeli campaign to evict as many Palestinians as possible from the holy city, strengthen the Ashkenazi presence there and obliterate every last detail that will support the Palestinian claim to the city. Israel has reserved for itself the right to build anywhere

in Arab east Jerusalem while the Palestinian residents are severely punished for exercising their basic right to build in the city. The thrust of the Israeli campaign is to deprive Palestinians of physical links with Arab east Jerusalem and dilute the strength of their claims in the city ahead of discussing the city's future. If indeed Israel will ever agree to do so. Wasn't that predetermining the outcome of the peace process on the part of Israel?

The list of Israeli contradictions is too long, and they are not new. We are fully aware that the dice are loaded against the Arabs every step of the way, and Israel will stop at nothing to fight off pressure from any quarters, whether European or American, in the quest for peace in the Middle East. It is up to the Europeans and Americans to fully understand the Israeli game and play their cards accordingly.



Dialectics in Jordan: Light versus dark

IF EXISTENCE, as a number of religions and philosophical schools speculate, is an eternal battle between diametrically opposed forces, then Jordan presents one of the best arenas in which to witness at least a portion of this cosmic conflict. Various belief systems have described such an unending confrontation in a number of ways: "good" versus "evil," the basis of the three major monotheistic religions, "class struggle," the central tenet of Marxism, and "The Force," which seemingly battles itself throughout the three Star Wars films, are just a few examples. For those persons currently living in Jordan, the bizarre decision to remain on winter time may make one think that the country has chosen to take sides in the Zoroastrian version of the eternal conflict: light versus dark.

By disregarding geographical realities, regional and worldwide norms and practices, and plenty of what I would term good advice, the government, in rejecting daylight savings time, has firmly placed the population of the country in the dark camp of this battle. No longer will those misguided advocates of light hold sway of the proponents of dark, led by Jordan, which has taken upon itself the task of carrying the banner of dimness to all parts of the world.

Consider the ramifications of this timing decision. While people in neighbouring countries are going about their business in a carefree, easy, and light manner, aided by the additional hour of glorious twilight of an afternoon sun, the populace of Jordan must bolt for their poorly lit warrens like a pack of unwilling vampires at 6:00 (1900 GMT) in the evening. Amman is fully lit while Damascus, Cairo and Tel Aviv still enjoy the natural, and cost-free, illumination of the friendly sun.

Cost, incidentally, was apparently the main factor in the decision to retain winter time. In another odd

angle to the story, however, the move to shun daylight savings time wasn't taken because of high costs, but for the opposite reason. Summer time didn't save enough money to make it feasible, only JD500,000 or so. Surprising, for a country facing severe austerity measures and terms stipulated by that bastion of sound economic advice, the IMF, to turn its nose up at any cost-effective measure. But then again, it does make sense, in a way, when you consider that second requirement of life, water, flowing in torrents down the streets of the capital. Did someone say waste not, want not?

It also seems rather strange to attempt a radical restructuring of what I assumed was a common international understanding of the earth's rotation. When it is 5:00 p.m. in Jordan, it is 7:00 p.m. in Iraq, a country that immediately borders Jordan, and 6:00 p.m. in Egypt and Israel, countries that are farther west. Amman and Paris, as one person pointed out, are effectively in the same time zone. Galileo must be turning in his grave thanks to this illogical situation. Can we really afford to throw away centuries of precious scientific effort which proved that the earth is round and revolves in a counterclockwise manner, i.e., east to west?

Finally, while I understand the need to be different, there may be a limit to how far others in the international community will tolerate an oddball country, or, as others with more hardline views than mine might decide to term Jordan, a rogue state. It could turn out to be a serious situation. After all, time, as the saying goes, is money. And other, wealthier countries may not take it kindly if Jordan's experiment with weird time zones goes horribly wrong and costs them hard currency. I have to admit that I'm not sure how this situation could come about, but stranger things have happened.

But while we wait for the sanc-

tions to be slapped in place and the bombs to fall in order to force Jordan to adhere to the principles and standards of the international community, we might as well try to wring some kind of advantage out of a bad situation. And as usual, I have devised the perfect means of doing so. Jordan will mount an intensive international public relations campaign to convince people to put aside their fears of visiting a country that keeps odd time, highlighting everything the country has to offer: archaeology, the Aqaba resort city, Jesus' baptism site, etc. As an added bonus, each visitor will receive a complimentary copy of the Jordan Times. But what will make this new campaign a sure-fire success will be its slogan, which captures the new spirit in the country ushered in by the bold winter time decision: "There's always time for Jordan."

RECOMMENDED READING:
Metamorphosis, by Franz Kafka. While we're on the subject of weird occurrences, try this classic by Kafka. Gregor, the protagonist, awakens one morning to find that he has become a large insect. Following this transformation, he is shunned as an outcast, even by his own family. A seminal tale of alienation.

Out of Order



Brian Brown

...if the border between Israel and Jordan were shut tight tomorrow... it would barely register as a blip on the Israeli economic screen'

counts is more fundamental to Middle East peace than business. That's because Jordan has become the model for the long-heralded but little evidenced "peace dividend." Although total investment and trade is small, commercial relations between Israel and Jordan only go back to the signing of a commercial treaty in 1996. In that short time, one industrial park has been developed, two more are on the way and as many as 3,000 jobs have been created in Jordan. Thanks to Washington's efforts, the parks enjoy the same duty-free access to the U.S. as Israel does.

None of this adds up to an economic bonanza, but it does show that peace can lead to concrete economic benefits.

The response of many Jordanians has been, in so many words, "thanks for nothing" because Israeli investment creates low-paying factory jobs, while Israel retains management and most skilled positions. Certainly there is an element of justice in this claim, and Israelis would be naive to assume — as most do now — that this kind of relationship can be sustained indefinitely.

But the reality is that Jordan and other Arab countries have low wage scales, and that is for now their principal competitive advantage to the world economy. And those are the kind of badly needed jobs they can create. Jordan also has a relatively well-educated population, so it can and should aspire to better things quickly. With Israel (at least for now) badly in need of engineers, the day may come sooner than either side expects.

— *The Jerusalem Report*

Why Jordan matters

By David Rosenberg

THE DEATH of King Hussein will almost certainly have significant consequences for the future of Middle East peace. But in the Israeli economic constellation, any fallout from cooler relations with Jordan would seem marginal.

Israel-Jordanian trade reached just \$42 million last year, about the same as Israel's trade with Bulgaria.

In any event, Jordanian exports don't stay in Israel but go on to the Palestinian National Authority, a more appropriate market for Jordanian products. Israeli companies have invested about \$50 million in Jordan, not an especially big amount. The entire Jordanian economy is about \$8 billion a year vs. Israel's \$100 billion.

Compared to other Arab countries, Jordan has been highly receptive to Israeli trade and investment. Still, if the border were shut tight tomorrow, statistically speaking, it would barely register as a blip on the Israeli economic screen. The deeper truth, though, is that Jordan counts economically much more than it appears on several levels.

Jordan and the rest of the Arab World are the key to the survival of many of Israel's low-tech industries. In the world of open trade and investment, Israeli firms can only compete if they can compete internationally. But in fields like textiles and basic manufacturing, where the labour-cost component is a major factor, Israel doesn't stand a chance against international competitors because the wages it pays are too high. If these industries aren't going to die, the solution is to transfer production via direct investment, joint ventures or — subcontracting to Israel's lower-cost neighbours.

Jordan is the chief candidate for this practice, because it boasts a combination of low wages, good infrastructure, a stable political and legal environment and, of course, it's right next door. There is much to be said for having your factory 90 minutes' drive from your headoffice rather than a 12-hour flight away. Jordan's two main competitors — the PNA and Egypt — have many of the same assets, but not all of them.

Israel's textile industry has been the first to act on this, and is the source of most Israeli investment in Jordan. Egypt and the Palestinian areas. Today, 10 per cent of "Israeli" textile and apparel exports are produced in the Arab World. Given time, other industries will no doubt follow.

The second reason Jordan

feature

Gas mask

The S

Features

By Roufan Nahhas

AMMAN — Umm Nasser, mother of seven boys and five girls, leaves her home in eastern Amman and heads towards the other side of town. On her way, she takes a glimpse at the beautiful houses, and stops with a sigh at a life she will never live.

Umm Nasser is a gypsy. She lives with her family in what is now known as Wadi Marbat, also known as Gypsy's Bridge or Jisr Al Nawar. Her husband and three of her sons, one of which is waiting for a visa to the Gulf, work at the Amman Municipality. Their house has three bedrooms, but as she puts it, "it keeps us close."

Based on linguistic evidence, the similarity between the Romany and Hindi languages, indicates that gypsies originated from north-western India. The first migration dates back to the 5th century and was reportedly an exodus of 12,000 musicians; hence the common stereotype of the gypsy player. Another followed at the time of the Muslim invasions of northern India in the early 800's. Several waves of invasions resulted in emigrations to south-eastern Europe in the early 1300s, central/eastern Europe in the 1400s and western and northern Europe later in the 1400s into the early 1500s.

Since the 1400s gypsies in Europe have been persecuted, banished, forced to integrate and enslaved; an estimated 600,000 gypsies were exterminated by the Nazis.

The situation in the Middle East was hardly better. Gypsies originated from the Bani Moura tribe who had to abandon their lands after losing a battle against Al Zeer tribe after which Al Zeer's chief Abu Laila Al Muhalhal forbade them to ride horses and forced them to use donkeys instead. During his tough rule they were humiliated and forced to move and leave their lands.

Today, gypsies are no longer so much in touch with their traditions, values or even their colourful dresses, and the gypsy life held a certain attraction for many, including the poet and good friend of the gypsies, Mustafa Wabbi Tell, better known as Arar, who gives a beautiful picture of them:

No greed and no keenness between the tents

and no care for a fils or a dinar
all gypsies are equal
that wipes the differences
between two neighbours.

Historically, gypsies moved from one place to another with their tents, searching for peace and food, leading a harsh unstable life where men depended on women to provide money for their families through begging, dancing and reading fortunes.

Selling women, according to historians, was the worst habit in gypsy society. Bored husbands used to sell their wives, with the option of buying her back for double the price. Such cultural idiosyncrasies had a price, and to this day people still look down upon them.

"People still think that we are the lowest of people," the 25-year-old Youssi, who is working with

his father at their small grocery shop, said. "People see us as garbage collectors and beggars, but we are not," he said pointing at himself.

Although a great number of gypsies work at the Amman Municipality, some have been able to strike out on their own.

"I am a mechanic, and there is nothing I don't know about cars," Mohammed said after taking a Coca Cola from the shop.

"I learnt about cars from a mechanic who taught me everything, and now I am trying to open my own shop," he continued proudly.

He is in the right line of work as driving in Wadi Marbat can be quite an experience.

There are rocks spread like mines along the street, which put your driving ability under serious examination.

Furthermore, the street doubles as a football field.

An unavoidable encounter with a great number of kids of all ages playing football brings progress to a standstill, as, totally unimpressed with the presence of the car, they continue unaffected their own little version of the World Cup.

"They have nowhere to go, no playing grounds, so the streets become their life," Umm Nasser explained.

The originality of the place takes you back in time as you still see kids riding donkeys and wandering in the street half naked.

Anas, a 6-year-old kid who, when asked about his age said: "I am eleven", is like many of the kids who roam the streets kicking a can of Pepsi.

"I want to play all the time," he said wiping his running nose with his hand, "and I hate school," he added.

Anas is one of many drop-outs who are spending most of their time in the streets.

"Lack of parental guidance and care can lead the kids to leave school, ignorance and perhaps a life of misery," Youssi said, as he watched the group of kids playing football beside his shop.

Youssi, a young ambitious man, plans to move from the area and find a girl to marry.

"When the time comes I want to find another place to live in and then get married; it is impossible to stay here," he said.

Marriage in this small society has its story too.

"Kidnapping [Al khatfeh]: where a man kidnaps a woman in order to force her family's blessings] existed in our society in the old days. A guy sees a girl and they run away until they have their parents' approval," Umm Nasser recalls.

"But now this custom has died out along with our traditional colourful dresses and earnings," she added.

Gypsies all around the globe are distinguished by their colourful dresses, jewellery, vivid dances and haunting music.

"I still keep a dress with its beautiful bright colours in a safe place. It reminds me of the old days," Umm Nasser said.

"But these days we are becoming more modern and wear only the most expensive dresses," she laughs lifting her torn black dress.



Umm Nasser in her three-bedroom house which holds fourteen people (photo Roufan Nahhas)

There is also a dark side to life in this forgotten area.

"Although we are a small society, we still hear of crimes and problems which can make our lives insecure," Youssi said.

"A man killed another for a wristwatch, and two families fought because two kids engaged in a fight with each other while playing," he said.

"Kids can be a major headache for the families in this area. Many troubles between grown ups are caused by little kids who play and fight," Abu Khaled, who lives near the area, said.

"That is why I tell my kids to stay home and not to play in the street," he continued.

Officials of the Amman Municipality estimate the number of gypsies in Wadi Marbat at around 2000-2500, but nothing could be confirmed about the exact number nationwide. This is partly because many of the gypsies have built their houses without licence.

"The area here is full of people who own houses illegally and this might bring problems in the future for all of us," Youssi said.

I want to play all the time, and I hate school! Some of the kids preparing themselves for the World Cup team photo (photo Roufan Nahhas)

Gas masked troops add urgency to opposition movement in Iraq

By Patrick Cockburn

IRAQI PRESIDENT Saddam Hussein, is deploying troops wearing gas masks and special white uniforms, designed to protect them against chemical weapons, around Najaf, a city at the centre of opposition to his leadership.

The appearance of soldiers equipped against chemical warfare has caused terror in Najaf, where there are well-founded fears that the government is prepared to use poison gas against them if there is any sign of an uprising. A traveller who left Najaf recently said: "Everybody was so frightened when they saw the chemical warfare suits that they locked themselves in their houses. The streets were empty."

Iraq has used chemical weapons against domestic opponents in the past. In

1988, Iraqi artillery and aircraft used munitions filled with the nerve gases sarin and tabun against the Kurdish town of Halabja, killing 5,000 people.

Iraqi troops equipped with tanks and multiple rocket launchers have sealed off Najaf since February 19, when Ayatollah Mohammed Sadiq Al Sadr, a popular leader of the Shia Muslims, who are a majority in Iraq, was shot dead in an ambush with his two sons. He is widely believed in Iraq to be the latest victim of government death squads, who are alleged to have killed four senior members of the Shia clergy in the past five years.

The Iraqi government is aware that any sign that it is about to use poison gas — such as troops wearing chemical warfare suits — provokes terror among Iraqis. In 1991, Iraqi helicopters dropped flour,

which looks like a cloud of gas, on the Kurds, in response to their uprising, to speed up their flight to Turkey and Iran.

Opponents of the Baghdad regime living in exile say that President Hussein has chosen this moment to increase repression against the Shia because he knows international attention is focused on Kosovo, Yusuf Al Khiose, a member of a Shia charitable organisation in London, says: "I have seen nothing as bad as this since the uprising after the Gulf War [in 1991]. There are many arrests and executions.

Saddam knows the attention of the world is focused elsewhere." The Shia

make up 55 per cent of the Iraqi population but are excluded from power.

Hussein appears to consider the Shia's

religious leaders, most of whom live in the holy cities of Najaf, Kufah and Karbala on the Euphrates, as being the most

dangerous potential rebels to his rule.

Ayatollah Sadr built up a religious organisation throughout southern Iraq and in Baghdad. Before his murder he appointed community judges and prayer leaders, many of whom have now been arrested.

Iraqi security has such a tight grip on Najaf and the other holy cities that it is unlikely anybody other than government death squads could have carried out the assassinations of Sadr and the other senior clerics.

An Iraqi who left Najaf 10 days ago says the government's claim to have caught and executed the killers "is only good for Iraqi propaganda outside Iraq. Nobody believes it at home." The Baghdad government has, however, taken advantage of the assassinations by using them as an excuse to place surviving Shia

leaders under virtual house arrest, ostensibly for their own protection. Armed Iraqi security men now prevent visitors from seeing the Grand Ayatollah, Ali Sistani.

Meanwhile, the U.S. and British governments are seeking to remodel the Iraqi opposition at a two-day meeting at a hotel in Windsor, Berkshire, which started yesterday. The meeting is of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), the deeply divided umbrella organisation of the opposition, and is to set a date for its general assembly, possibly later in the month.

Hoshyar Zibari, a leader of the powerful Kurdistan Democratic Party, which belongs to the INC, says the aim is to choose a new leadership.

The White House, U.S. State Department and the CIA are eager to remove

control of the INC from its leader, Ahmad Chalabi, who has strong support in the U.S. Congress.

Chalabi advocates a guerrilla war using promised U.S. equipment in the hope of provoking mutinies within the army. Zibari said he sees the future of the INC as a political organisation and not as a military movement.

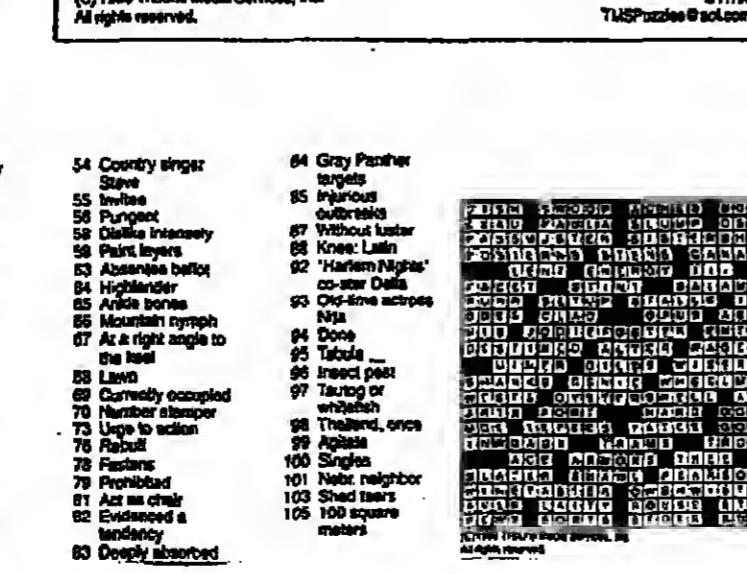
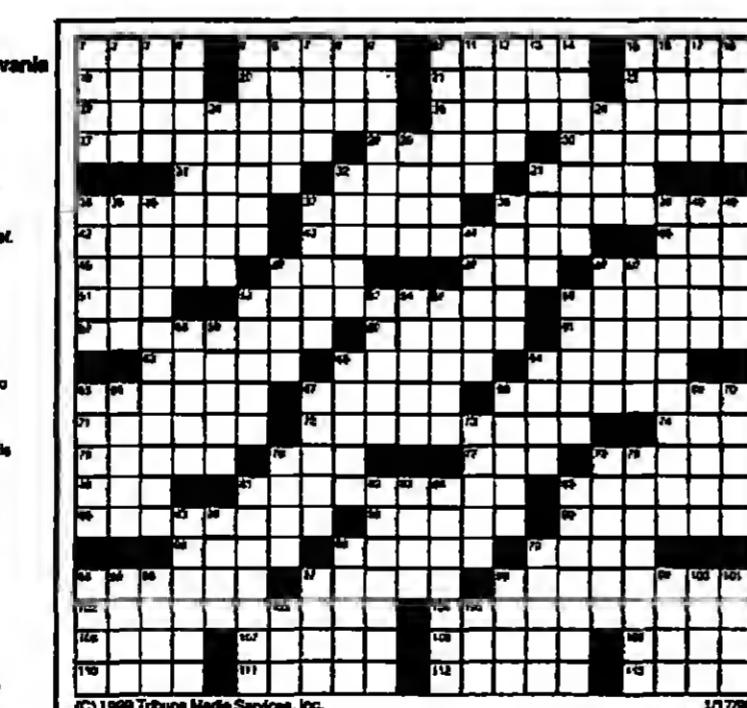
The Kurdish parties are unlikely to agree to the INC operating from Kurdistan, the only part of Iraq outside the control of Saddam Hussein, unless they receive cast-iron assurances from the U.S. that it will protect them in the event of an Iraqi counter-attack. Kurdish misgivings about U.S. air support have been compounded by its failure to prevent Serbia expelling the Kosovars.

— The Independent

The Saturday Crossword

GET BEAT

By Xan Lattimore, Rosemont, Pennsylvania



Grey wolves stalk Turkish politics

By Steve Bryant

Reuters

A LONE grey wolf howls at the sky from a crag on a bleak mountain range.

A policeman carries his pistol with the three-crescent standard of Turkish nationalism embossed on the base of the handle in mother-of-pearl.

A mob of furious men surround a Kurdish party office chanting "martyrs never die," their hands raised to form symbolic wolf heads. Right-wing gunmen pump six bullets into the belly of a human rights activist alleged to be supporting Kurdish rebels.

The far-right, redolent with its powerful imagery, is no fringe embarrassment in Turkey. It is a pervasive and sometimes violent force that has shaped national politics.

The party at the heart of the movement seems well placed to win parliamentary seats in April 18 elections.

The charismatic founder of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) may have died in 1997, but loyal followers know his vision of a homogeneous Turkish community stretching from the Balkans to the Great Wall of China has entered the national consciousness.

In the Turkish capital Ankara, a stream of respectable couples and young men stroll up a hillside to pay respect at the tomb of nationalist "bulldog" or chieftain, Alparslan Turkes.

Turkes was the inspiration for "grey wolf" right-wing gangs whose street fights with leftists in the 1970s cost 5,000 lives and provoked a military coup.

State institutions were purged of leftists over three years of army rule, while the right quietly reassessed its influence.

A battered satchel containing the Muslim holy book swings from the headstone of the plain marble tomb. "The inscription reads 'Alparslan Turkes, date of birth: 1917'. There is no date of death, since he was immortal," says Senol Dogan, a cheery devotee who keeps a vigil by the tomb and sells nationalist badges and banners from a nearby hut.

"Turkey for the Turks," reads one

poster, a grim message to armed rebels seeking self-rule in the mainly-Kurdish southeast.

"As you know there are some traitors in this country who want to divide the motherland. This is our warning to them that we will not give up," says Dogan.

Lurid pictures of wolves abound on his stall. Nationalism is steeped in a mythology that says a she-wolf called Asena led Turks out of central Asia in the mists of pre-history.

And the MHP is convinced it will escape from the political wasteland after the April elections.

Fed by Kurdish rebel conflict in 1995, the MHP drew just over eight per cent, short of the 10 per cent needed to qualify for seats in parliament.

"This year we will win 17 or 18 per cent," Dogan says.

But analysts argue a decrease in the intensity of the conflict with Kurdish rebels has reduced the force that drove much of the rise in Turkish nationalism. Fighting, which has cost more than 29,000 lives in 14 years, peaked in the early 1990s.

"I am one of those who say they will not beat the barrier," said Ismet Berkman of Liberal Radikal newspaper. "In the past the conflict in the southeast was fiercest, the atmosphere that the MHP is based on — that culture of martyrs — was more powerful and they had Alparslan Turkes as their leader."

"Even then they could not beat the barrier." But at party headquarters, its walls decked with pictures of the "chieftain" and his less inspirational successor Devlet Bahceli, the mood is more confident.

"There will be no problem with the threshold for the MHP. We believe the political situation favours us," says Koray Aydin, general secretary and a candidate for parliament in Ankara.

Certainly a newly assertive foreign policy that forced climb-downs from Syria, Greece and Greek Cyprus is playing the MHP's tune. And the capture in February of Kurdish guerrilla leader Abdullah Ocalan was celebrated as a national victory.

Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit has won much of the credit for the capture

of Ocalan and his blend of leftism and nationalism could eat into MHP support.

"After the arrest of Abdullah Ocalan, the MHP is finding that a lot of the undecideds they might have hoped to attract have been taken by Ecevit," says Kemal Can, author of a book on the far-right in Turkey.

"I think the MHP is in a position from which it will be hard to hear the threshold. It is on a critical boundary," Can said.

In or out of parliament, few have any doubts of the MHP's success in polarising nationalist thought and preventing any wavering in Turkish support for "ethnic brothers" in Cyprus, divided since 1974 into Turkish and Greek sectors.

Turks hold similar feelings of kinship towards Albanians in Kosovo and a small Turkish minority there.

"Its ideas are still powerful. Throughout the 1990s there was a general shift to the right, to nationalism in Turkish politics... The MHP perhaps still carries a symbolic role as the bearer of this nationalism but all parties have internalised what it said," Can said.

The party says it has "idealists" — in its description of committed nationalists — at every level of society.

"The MHP is a party of members. We have professors in universities, judges and prosecutors in the courts, doctors in the hospitals, teachers in schools," Aydin said.

Support for the far-right is also strong among members of security forces and the ranks of the interior ministry.

Aydin says the party's success lies in its deep roots and ideology.

"The MHP rests on decades of thought and writing and theory. A newcomer to nationalism such as Ecevit has nothing to teach us or say to us," he said.

Failure to win parliamentary elections will not be disaster for the MHP. Most of its ideas have been assimilated into other parties and it will work to ensure things stay that way.

"Come back and have a cup of tea sometime" said Dogan beside the chieftain's tomb. "I am always here."

Kournikova stays hot, beats Davenport

AMELIA ISLAND, FLORIDA (AP) — Anna Kournikova looked over to her mother and flashed a big smile she rarely shows on the court. Indeed, this was a victory to get excited about.

The ninth-seeded Kournikova defeated No. 1 seed Lindsay Davenport of the United States 6-4, 6-1 on Thursday in the Bausch and Lomb championships, a victory that intensifies the hot streak that began for the Russian about a month ago.

"I was just happy with the win," she said. "When you beat No. 2 in the world, you should be happy." Combined with her appearance in the final of the Family Circle Cup last week, Kournikova has a chance to move up as many as 11 places in the rankings over a two-week span by winning a title here.

Either way, the world's 16th-ranked player has a big upset to add to her resume. Her last victory of this magnitude came against Switzerland's Martina Hingis last May in Berlin.

"This was important for me because I haven't beaten a top, top player in

some time," she said. "So, this is very good. It gives me a lot of confidence. I need this."

Her next match will be against No. 6 seed Patty Schnyder of Switzerland, a rematch of Kournikova's victory in the semifinals last week.

Schnyder defeated Argentina's Ines Gorrochategui 7-5, 6-2.

Elsewhere in the round of 16, No. 5 Amanda Coetzer of South Africa beat No. 14 Virginia Ruano Pascual of Spain 6-1, 7-5, and Romania's Roxandra Dragomir defeated No. 8 seed Barbara Schett of Austria 6-2, 6-2.

Two days after beating American teen star Venus Williams, Canada's Sonya Jeyaseelan fell 6-4, 6-2 to Fabiola Zuluaga of Colombia.

In a late match, defending champion Mary Pierce of France, the fourth seed, overcame a spotty effort to beat No. 15 compatriot Nathalie Dechy 2-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Pierce faces a quarterfinal Thursday against No. 7 Conchita Martinez of Spain, who beat No. 10 Chanda Rubin of the United States 7-6 (8-6) 5-7, 6-2

in a test of endurance that lasted 2 hours, 40 minutes. Martinez, who won this tournament in 1995, did a nice job changing paces from the baseline on the slow green clay that suits her game perfectly.

"All these players are playing unbelievably right now," Martinez said. "It's hard, but you have to be ready to be out on the court as long as it's going to last. You can never give up and you have to know it's going to be a long match."

No. 2 Monica Seles of the United States needed only 41 minutes to defeat Alexandra Fusai of France 6-0, 6-1. Seles has lost only five games in two matches, but still has concerns about her game, especially with her next stop the Fed Cup next week.

"I'm realistic, I have to raise my level of play," said Seles, who will play Coetzer in the quarterfinals. "I need to be more consistent. I'm missing balls left and right. I'm not used to that and it's frustrating."



Chelsea's Italian player-manager Gianluca Vialli (L) is tackled by Real Mallorca defender Miquel Soler in the semi-final of the UEFA Cup Winners Cup at Stamford Bridge. The game ended in a 1-1 draw (Reuters photo)

World Youth Championship England and Brazil struggling

LAGOS (AFP) — Brazil and England, two of the biggest names at the World Youth Championship, are struggling.

England were headed for an early exit after going down to a 1-0 defeat against Cameroon in their Group E match at Kanu on Thursday.

The English Under-20 team lost 1-0 to a 64th-minute goal from Gaspard Komol, his second of the championship.

In their opening match on

Monday, England lost 1-0 to the United States and currently stand bottom of their group, with no points and no goals scored.

Cameroon tops the group on six points, with the United States, who lost 3-1 to Japan on Thursday, level with the Japanese on three points.

Brazil, placed third in Group F after two matches, face a "difficult match" Sunday against Zambia if they are to go through to the

next round, their coach said.

Brazil lost their opening match of the three-week youth football tournament when they were defeated 2-0 on Monday by Spain, but they won 3-0 on Thursday against Honduras.

That win leaves them on three points, one point behind both Spain and Zambia in the group.

"We are going to have a difficult match against Zambia and in order to win we are going to have to play

Reynolds aiming for new records, gold in Seville

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — World 400-metre record-holder Butch Reynolds is back on track for big time athletics, and success at the World Championships in Seville in August, is high on his priority list.

After arriving in Johannesburg on Thursday to prepare for Saturday's International track and field meeting between South

Africa, England and an International Select team, the 34-year-old athlete from Atlanta said he will remain competitive until after next year's Olympic Games in Sydney.

"No world record is safe," said the tall American, in response to questions relating to his world best of 43.29 seconds which was set at a Grand Prix meeting in

Zurich in 1988.

"Records are there to be broken. Michael Johnson is an extremely strong athlete and on the right day, he can take it. The same applies to fellow Americans Antonio Pettigrew, Jerome Young and Tyree Washington, and Britain's Iwan Thomas."

"When I set the record in Zurich, everything was right on the night. The best in the world competed, but most importantly, the pace was fast right from the start."

Reynolds, who opened his 1999 outdoor campaign by clocking 45.13 seconds at a meeting in Florida in the United States a fortnight ago, also told reporters: "I need to work on my conditioning and the way I run the bend."

"My strength is in the way I run the straights. I believe that with guys like Johnson, Washington, Young and myself around, the USA can break their 4x400 metre world relay record of 2:54.20 set at last year's Goodwill Games in Uniondale, US, in Seville, Spain."

His main opposition at Saturday's meeting — to be staged at 1,400 metres above sea level at the Pilditch stadium — will come from South African runners in Jopie van Oudshoorn and Adriaan Botha, who have respective summer season bests of 44.88 and 45.40.

The International Select line up for Saturday includes world 800 metre indoor recordholder Maria Mutola from Mozambique, and should provide more of a match for South Africa, compared to the England team.

England are minus its star athletes such as world triple jump recordholder Jonathan Edwards, javelin throwers Steve Backley and Mick Hill, triple jumper Astur Hansen, and injured 800 metre runner Kelly Holmes.

PARIS (AFP) — Italian giants Lazio and Spanish surprise packets Real Mallorca scored impressive away draws on Thursday night and are now the favourites to qualify for the last-ever European Cup Winners' Cup final.

Chelsea's lost possession in midfield and Yugoslav Veljko Paunovic slipped a near pass in for Dani, a target of English club Sheffield Wednesday, to beat first Leboeuf and then De Goyc before clipping the ball into the net with 12 minutes left before half-time.

Chelsea, who haven't lost in 26 previous home European ties, responded with two long-range efforts by Jody Morris and a glancing header by Marcel Desailly, but went in at the break looking in need of defeat in Europe.

Real Mallorca's fleet-footed Spanish international Dani had expertly put the Spaniards ahead after 31 minutes when he outpaced Frank Leboeuf and rounded Chelsea goalkeeper Ed De Goyc before slotting home.

In Moscow, Croatian international striker Alen Boksic — playing for the first time in almost 12 months — scored the goal that salvaged a 1-1 draw for Lazio against Lokomotiv Moscow.

Georgian international Zaza Dzanaishi, who tops the competition scoring list with six goals, scored a well-taken solo goal in the 60th minute to put Lokomotiv in front before Boksic celebrated his return to top class football after a season-long absence through a knee injury with a 76th-minute equaliser.

Hector Raul Cuper's Mallorca team, who led the Spanish first division before

the second half.

France's Marcel Desailly said afterwards: "We will need patience. They will have to come out of their half and attack in the second leg and I think we will have many opportunities to score."

Both teams played cautiously in the opening 45 minutes in Moscow — probing for defensive frailties — but Dzanaishi broke the deadlock 15 minutes into the second half.

He ran through with only Lazio goalkeeper Luca Marchegiani to beat. The keeper forced Dzanaishi out wide to his left but failed to dispossess the striker, whose momentum meant he had to find goal from an acute angle.

Dzanaishi turned 360 degrees and shot acrobatically to find the net before falling to the ground and then celebrating with a somersault.

Boksic then came on for his first match since injuring his knee just before last year's World Cup, while Roberto Mancini replaced striker Marcelo Salas.

The substitutions by Lazio's Swedish coach Sven Goran Eriksson proved a masterstroke.

Yugoslav ace Mihajlovic crossed from the right and Mancini deftly flicked the ball on to Boksic, who powered the ball home with the outside of his right foot.

Eriksson said he was pleased with the result.

"A draw was the logical result of a match between two strong opponents," he said. "Lokomotiv turned out to be tough opposition."

Morocco and Tunisia can seal Nations Cup places

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Morocco and Tunisia will become the first qualifiers for the 2000 African Nations Cup if they win pool matches this weekend.

While Morocco should defeat Togo comfortably at home in Group 2, Tunisia visit a Ugandan team desperate for revenge following a six-goal Group 7 thrashing in Tunis.

Ranked No. 1 in Africa for more than one year, Morocco owe their success to the stability created by coach Henri Michel, who guided his native France to third place at the 1986 World Cup.

Defender Nouredine Naybet, midfield playmaker Mustapha Hadji and striker Salaheddine Bassir, who line up with Spanish club Deportivo La Coruna, form the spine of the team.

Tunisia boast the only 100 per cent record at the halfway stage of the qualifiers, having recovered speedily from a disappointing 1998 World Cup campaign in France.

Italian coach Francisco Scoglio has blended many old faces with some new while the return from injury of 1998 African Nations Cup star Hassan Gahsi has proved a timely bonus.

Mozambique will hope history repeats itself in a top-of-the-table Group 1 clash with Cameroon having triumphed 3-0 when the Indomitable Lions visited Maputo 16 years ago.

Cote d'Ivoire are seeking their fourth consecutive win over Congo in Abidjan while Mali must defeat Namibia in the other Group 3 match to retain any chance of overtaking the pacesetters.

Gabon defend a 28-year unbeaten home record in qualifiers against a South African team lacking goalkeeper Hans Vonk and striker Philemon Masinga due to European club commitments.

Burkina Faso will move within one point of the finals if they complete a Group 5 double over Burundi while Zambia should consolidate their leadership of Group 6 at home to struggling Kenya.

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Higham Yanes Theatre
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The political satire
AL SALAM AL
Starting at 8:30 p.m.

Sports

Morocco and Tunisia can seal Nations Cup place

SPORTS IN BRIEF

'Schett is Austria's danger player'

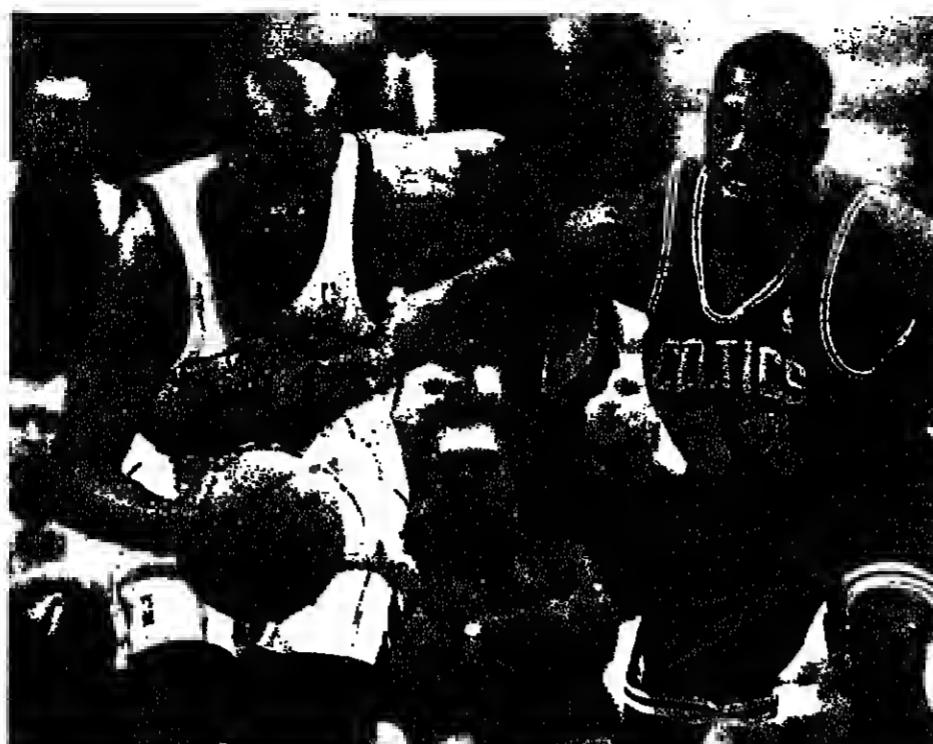
SYDNEY (AFP) — Barbara Schett will be the main threat to Australia when they meet Austria for the first tie in the Federation Cup, Australia's captain Lesley Bowrey said here on Friday. The Australian Tennis Federation has announced world No.19 Schett, along with Sylvia Plischke (39), Barbara Schwartz (121) and Patricia Wartusch (130) will take on the Australians in the World Group II first-round tie in Klagenfurt on April 17 and 18. The Australian challenge will be headed by veterans Nicole Pratt, ranked 78, and Renae Stubbs (196), backed by youngsters Alicia Molik (101) and Jelena Dokic (206). Bowrey said 23-year-old Schett, who so far this year has reached the fourth round of the Australian Open and the semi-finals in Auckland and Sydney, was the main threat to the Australian team. "Schett has been performing well this year but so have our girls," Bowrey said. "Jelena beat Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario and Sandrine Testud at the Hopman Cup, and Alicia upset Natasha Zvereva in Sydney." At stake is a spot in the elite 13-nation World Group of the revamped 2000 Fed Cup competition.

Pakistan players held in Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — Mexican authorities on Thursday detained and prepared to deport nine Pakistanis, all members of a soccer club whose visas had expired, the National Migration Institute said. The Pakistanis, players and managers of a team that played in the Monterrey '99 Amateur Cup, were detained at Mexico City's airport as they prepared to board a plane to Tijuana, on the United States border. Their Mexican visas had expired on Tuesday. The Pakistanis were trying to board a plane to Tijuana, most probably with the intention of jumping over to the other side and reaching the United States, the migration agency said. It said they would be deported later in the day.

Baric takes over as Austrian coach

VIENNA (AFP) — Croatian Otto Baric has been named Austrian coach to replace Herbert Prohaska who quit following last month's Euro 2000 qualifier 9-0 hammering against Spain in Valencia. The 65-year-old is due to meet shortly with Austrian Football Federation President Beppo Maubart. He is expected to sign his contract next week. Baric, presently coach of Austrian first division side Lask Linz, is the first foreign coach of the Austrian team since Slovenia's Branko Elsner in 1987. The 9-0 defeat against Spain was Austria's most humiliating footballing moment since they went down 11-1 to England in 1908.



Toronto Raptors' Vince Carter (L) and Boston Celtics' Paul Pierce battle for the ball during first half NBA action in Toronto. Carter and Pierce are strong candidates for NBA rookie of the year honors (Reuters photo)

Spurs beat Rockets in Houston

HOUSTON (R) — Tim Duncan had 18 points and 13 rebounds as the San Antonio Spurs used a balanced attack to defeat the Rockets 92-83 on Houston's homecourt Thursday, extending their winning streak to six games.

The Rockets came in with a nine-game home winning streak and could have moved past the Spurs into second place in the Midwest Division with another victory. But Duncan spearheaded the charge that saw all five Spurs starters score in double figures.

"We didn't have the fire we needed," said Rockets coach Rudy Tomjanovich. "I don't understand the lack of intensity."

They are a good team but I expected it to be more of a game than it was."

Sean Elliott scored 10 of his 19 points in the first quarter for San Antonio, which has won nine of its last 10 games and stayed within 1 1/2 games of first-place Utah in the Midwest.

"It was a war like we thought it would be," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. "These guys compete against each other really tough. We're just happy to come out of here with a win."

Heekeem Olajuwon had 27 points and 12 rebounds for Houston, which has lost twice at home to San Antonio this season. Star forward Scottie Pippen was limited to just four points in 34 minutes.

"Elliott guarded Pippen

most of the game and I think he did a really great job," Popovich said. "Nobody ever seems to notice how hard he works defensively."

In Seattle, Gary Payton scored 20 points and Detlef Schrempf added 17 as the Supersonics rallied from a 15-point deficit to snap the Portland Trail Blazers four-game winning streak with an 87-86 victory.

Portland, which is 27-7 still has the best record in the NBA, failed to convert two chances to win at the end.

Following a steal by Rasheed Wallace, the Blazers had the ball with 16 seconds left. Jim Jackson threw a high pass in the lane to Wallace, who could not come down with it cleanly.

Following a scramble, the ball went off Wallace's foot and out of bounds with 1.5 seconds remaining.

Pörtschmid got one last chance after Schrempf's inbounds pass went off John Croft's hands with two-tenths of a second left.

But Jackson's pass from mid-court could not be tipped towards the basket as time ran out.

In Toronto, Kenny Anderson, who was traded to the Raptors last season but refused to report, had 23 points and seven assists to lead the Boston Celtics past the Raptors, 101-89.

Anderson was booed throughout the game.

"That makes me feel really important," Anderson said.

"When I was here I didn't

think anyone knew who Kenny Anderson was. It's nothing against Toronto. I just didn't want to be in another country."

Antoine Walker contributed 18 points and 10 rebounds and Ron Mercer scored 14 points for Boston.

In Cleveland, Penny Hardaway scored 23 points and the Orlando Magic notched their season-high fifth straight win by allowing just five baskets over the final 21-plus minutes of a 73-69 victory over the Cavaliers.

Shaun Kemp collected 17 points and nine rebounds for Cleveland (17-17), which fell one game behind Philadelphia and Toronto in the race for the final two eastern conference playoff berths. The Cavs were playing their third game in three nights.

At Utah, Karl Malone scored a season-high 38 points and the Jazz turned it on down the stretch for a 92-85 victory over the Golden State Warriors.

In Los Angeles, Maurice Taylor scored 20 points and the Clippers used a big third quarter to snap a six-game losing streak with a 99-91 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves, defeating them for the second time this season.

Krajicek dumped out in Hong Kong quarters

HONG KONG (AFP) — World No. 4 and top seed Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands was bundled out in the quarter-finals of the \$350,000 Hong Kong Open here on Friday.

A lacklustre Krajicek was beaten by Germany's Hendrik Dreeckmann 6-3, 3-6, 6-3.

Krajicek's departure sees the tournament robbed of its top two seeds. Second seed Patrick Rafter of Australia was knocked out in the first round.

Krajicek, winner of the Lipton Championships in Key Biscayne a fortnight ago, looked out of sorts and failed to come to terms with the tenacious style of the

German, ranked 96 in the world.

After coming back from a first set deficit, Krajicek failed to keep the momentum going when he was crucially broken early in the decisive third set.

Dreeckmann, who knocked out Michael Chang in the second round, sped to a 5-3 lead and had Krajicek on the ropes at 15-40, but the Dutchman saved two match points and managed to serve out the game.

But the respite was short-lived with Dreeckmann, scenting victory served his way to one of his biggest wins in his career.

"I don't know what I'm doing right ... I'm just winning and I don't care," said Dreeckmann.

He will now meet American Andre Agassi in the semi-finals.

Agassi nimbly on the power and style to breeze into the semi-finals with a straightforward 6-2, 6-2 victory over Germany's Nicolas Kiefer.

Agassi, who entered the tournament at the eleventh hour as a wild card, was in imperious form as he brushed aside Kiefer in exactly an hour.

The American World No. 12 and third seed broke Kiefer twice in each set to register his third straight-set victory of the tournament.

"I'm very pleased with the way I'm playing. It feels good to continue to this standard of play as the tournament goes on when the matches start to get tougher," said Agassi.

Kiefer, 21, had his chance in the sixth game of the second set when Agassi serving to take a 4-2 lead, trailed 0-40. But the youngster continued to make unforced errors to allow Agassi off the hook.

"Had he broken me at that stage, it could have turned into a battle. That was a crucial point and suddenly I was serving for the match," said Agassi.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE

Jazireh to organise Hussein Basketball Tournament

AMMAN — Al Jazireh Club is currently preparing to hold Al Hussein Basketball Championship next February as a tribute to the late King Hussein who passed away Feb. 7, Lebanon's top clubs — Al Riyadi and Al Hilal, as well as Alexandria's Ittihad and two teams from Greece and Syria are expected to take part in the event, to be hosted by Aramech, which sponsors Al Jazireh's basketball team. Al Jazireh were Jordan's First Division basketball champion in 1997.

Pedestrian bridge to be built ahead of Games

AMMAN — The Greater Amman Municipality will construct a pedestrian bridge in the area located between the Royal Cultural Centre, the media centre of the 9th Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein Tournament, and the Regency Hotel. Amman Mayor Nidal Hadid said a num-

ber of engineers will start setting up a feasibility study for the bridge, aiming at regulating the movement of more than 4,000 athletes, officials and media representatives, who will be staying in hotels in that area.

Taekwondo federation sets agenda

AMMAN — The Jordan Taekwondo Federation (JTF) will soon name its delegation, which will participate in the 14th International Championship for men and the 7th for women from June 2-6. During a recent meeting, chaired by Federation President Taha Shurdoni, the JTF also decided to take part in the 3rd Vietnam International Championship from July 18-17, and to hold a training camp in Taiwan from July 19-Aug. 9. Meanwhile, the national taekwondo team left for Iran to participate in the 11th Tehran International Championship for men. During the competition, which comes as part of preparations for the 9th Pan-Arab Games, the team will play against Korea, Iran, Taiwan, Egypt, Morocco Turkey and other countries' teams.

Sydney discovers unwanted Asian tourist

SYDNEY (AFP) — Australian health officials have ordered round-the-clock surveillance in Sydney port following the detection of the dreaded Asian tiger mosquito.

Officials say the insect, which can carry potentially deadly viruses such as yellow fever and dengue fever, was caught in a routine surveillance trap set by quarantine officers at Sydney's Port Botany.

It is not the first time Aedes

Aegypti has been found in Australia, but it has spread widely around the world so it is really inevitable that it would be detected here eventually. It is very aggressive in the reproductive sense."

"It is a mosquito which is a very successful coloniser and it has spread widely around the world so it is really inevitable that it would be detected here eventually. It is very aggressive in the reproductive sense."

New South Wales Health Department said Friday that in association with the AQIS it had instigated an enhanced surveillance system in and around Port Botany area following discovery of a single Asian tiger mosquito.

"The potential for a dengue outbreak in Sydney becomes quite high if the mosquito can establish itself here," he said.

"It's the world's most efficient vector of dengue fever."

The World Health

organisation regards dengue fever as the most important viral disease affecting humans that can be transmitted by mosquitoes.

Incidental fumigation will begin if any more of the insects are found.

"We have been expecting to find it in Sydney eventually," an AQIS spokesman told AFP. "It is not uncommon in north Queensland, but it is further south than we are used to which naturally gets us interested."

"It is a mosquito which is a very successful coloniser and it has spread widely around the world so it is really inevitable that it would be detected here eventually. It is very aggressive in the reproductive sense."

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"It's the world's most efficient vector of dengue fever."

The World Health

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Pass
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Pass

Opening lead: Eight of ♠

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The Young Muslim Women's Association appeals to your generosity

Army dissidents kill Niger president

NIAMEY (R) — Dissident soldiers ambushed Niger's President Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara at Niamey airport on Friday and the government said he had been killed.

Prime Minister Ibrahim Assane Mayaki announced Maïnassara's death in a broadcast on state radio but said only that he had been killed in an "unfortunate accident." Police and witnesses at the airport reported the ambush earlier.

"In the morning of Friday, an unfortunate accident resulted in the sudden death of the president of the republic," Mayaki said after hours of confusion in the capital.

He said Maïnassara's death came "at a particularly grave moment in the history of our country," a reference to growing political tension following chaotic local elections in February.

Mayaki went on to announce the dissolution of parliament and the suspension of political activity.

Although he said the present administration would continue in office until a national unity government took over, it was unclear who was really calling the shots.

Residents said calm reigned in the capital, with troops who earlier came out with tanks guarding the presidential palace, the airport and key ministries.

Witnesses and police sources at the airport said the ambush took place as Maïnassara was preparing to travel to the interior.

A correspondent for Radio France International reported from Niamey that body had been moved from the airport to a city clinic that residents said was owned by the president's wife.

Some members of the president's security staff were wounded critically in the attack, police and military sources said.

The airport was closed and officials said Air France had

cancelled a flight due to arrive later on Friday.

Earlier on Friday, troops with tanks moved into the streets, blocking access to the presidential palace and other key locations.

It was difficult to say if the assassination was part of a coup bid, and if so what had happened to the perpetrators.

Maïnassara, 49, a former army chief, ended Niger's first attempt at multi-party democracy with a coup in January 1996 that toppled an elected government.

Since winning a disputed presidential election in July of that year, Maïnassara had faced relentless pressure from a militant opposition spearheaded largely by leaders of the civilian government he overthrew.

His government has been grappling with a spate of public service strikes that have further paralysed the ailing economy of the debt-saddled Sahelian state.

Friday's events climaxed a

week of mounting political tension over the confused February elections.

The political temperature rose sharply on Thursday after an opposition call for resignation following a supreme court order for poll reruns in the majority of districts.

Vote counting in February was disrupted by violent attacks on poll centres as the opposition appeared in the lead.

Earlier on Friday and before death, state radio broadcast a government communiqué appealing for calm and vowing that authorities would deal with troublemakers.

"Court decisions are final and cannot be contested by either the government or the administration, the civilian population or the military," it said.

Telephone communications with the former French colony whose key neighbours are Nigeria and Algeria remained cut.



BULLFIGHTER HURDLES A BULL: A bullfighter jumps over a bull with a pole in a theatrical performance of the traditional 'Salto de la Garrocha' (Jump of the Garrocha) in the Seville convention centre on Friday. The show pays homage to the bulls used in traditional bullfights on the opening day of an international festival (Reuters photo)

Israeli army shells planned site of camp for Lebanese expellees

RASHAYA (AFP) — Israel bombarded Friday a no-man's land in southern Lebanon following reports of plans to set up a camp there for Lebanese expelled from Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon, security sources said.

Israeli artillery fired rockets, tank cannon and heavy machine-guns at roads leading to the Marj Al Zouhour no-man's land, located in southeastern Lebanon and adjacent to the eastern sector of the border zone, they said.

An Israeli MR reconnaissance plane was also seen flying over the region earlier Friday, they said.

"It seems the Israelis have taken plans to establish a camp in Marj Al Zouhour very seriously and is flexing its muscles to show the Lebanese authorities that will not allow

such a camp," an official told AFP.

Lebanese authorities have hinted at plans to set up a camp that could accommodate up to 300 Lebanese expelled from southern Lebanon since Israel withdrew to the current line of control in 1985.

Many believe the camp would be a repeat of the Marj Al Zouhour makeshift tent camp where 417 Palestinians deported by Israel in 1992 remained stranded for a year before the Jewish state agreed to take them back.

Plans provided for the projected camp to be placed under the supervision of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Expulsions from the border zone have recently increased, despite repeated protests by the Lebanese authorities who

consider them violations of the Geneva conventions and the April 1996 truce accord between Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah which prohibits the harming of civilians.

Since Jan. 7, Israel has expelled about 50 residents of the town of Shebaa which had more than 40,000 residents before Israel's 1978 occupation of southern Lebanon but today counts just 3,000 inhabitants.

Most of those expelled by Israel were relatives of militiamen who deserted from its proxy South Lebanon Army (SLA) and crossed into the government-held zone.

European Union special envoy Miguel Angel Moratinos, after meeting with Lebanese President Emile Lahoud in Beirut on Thursday,

said he would urge the Israeli authorities to end the expulsions of Lebanese residents from occupied southern Lebanon.

Lebanon has also filed a complaint over the expulsions from Shebaa with the international committee which monitors the April 1996 truce.

The committee said in a statement after a day-long session on Thursday that "there were differing views on whether this incident fell within the mandates of the April understanding."

"At the same time, the group noted the issue has been raised in other [diplomatic] channels and is being addressed by appropriate authorities," said the panel made up of delegates from France, Syria and the United States as well as Israel and Lebanon.

U.N. Security Council members disappointed with Iraq rejection

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — U.N. Security Council members expressed disappointment Friday with Iraq's rejection of U.N. panels set up to redraw U.N. strategy after December air strikes polarised the council.

In a report distributed here, Iraq charged that the panel on disarmament was "biased" and based on flawed premises as it reflected the views of panel members drawn from the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM), accused by Baghdad of spying for the Americans.

The Iraqi paper dismissed the recommendations of a second panel on the humanitarian situation saying that the Iraqi government would never accept the "trusteeship" of Iraq as proposed.

The report ignored the conclusions of the third panel which said that Iraq had not fully complied with demands to repatriate prisoners and property seized during the 1990 Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

Panel Chairman Celso Amorim of Brazil disputed Iraq's conclusions, saying that the panels were "solid, well-intended" and a serious effort to find replies.

"I would hope that the Iraqis would at least keep their wait-and-see attitude," he said.

U.S. Ambassador Peter Burleigh, reacting to the Iraqi response, told reporters: "It was very unfortunate because the Iraqis seem to have basi-

cally rejected most of it out of hand, and the council is looking forward to Iraqi cooperation and compliance."

But British Ambassador Sir Jeremy Greenstock played down the response as he arrived for council discussions on the panel reports, saying: "I think we've got quite a long way to go in the discussion in the council."

"Why doesn't Iraq wait and see what comes out of it?"

Russian Ambassador Sergei Lavrov noted that "it will be impossible to achieve a result without ensuring Iraqi cooperation, and this is very much on our mind."

"But it's very early to speculate. I am not saying that we are anywhere except making a first step," he added.

Non-permanent council members Bahrain, Canada and Slovenia joined the chorus of disappointment.

Bahrain Ambassador Jassim Buallay said: "Iraq is an important part in all this. The total rejection is disappointing."

"This is disturbing. The response is termed in very strong terms, I think inappropriately, and it doesn't help," said Ambassador Danilo Turk of Slovenia.

Canadian Ambassador Robert Fowler, who first proposed setting up the panels, said the Iraqi response was "an initial reaction."

He hoped that once the council had concluded its discussions, expected to last weeks, "the Iraqis might find

that there is something in it for them."

The most contentious panel was that on disarmament, on which the five permanent members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — remain divided.

Under U.N. resolutions, the eight-and-a-half-year-old oil embargo can only be lifted when all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction have been dismantled.

But Washington and London continue to resist proposals from China, France and Russia to lift the sanctions as an incentive to Iraq to cooperate with future long-term monitoring efforts.

The panel concluded that not all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction had been eliminated, notably in the chemical and biological field.

But it suggested that the remaining issues could be dealt with a new intrusive long-term monitoring system and a "renovated" UNSCOM currently tasked with Iraqi disarmament.

UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler was not at Friday's closed-door session, after deciding not to risk being barred by Russia from attending the discussions for the second time since Wednesday.

Butler's French political adviser, Eric Fournier, had hoped to attend Friday's session but was told that an UNSCOM representative would not be welcome. Western diplomats said.

OCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — It may have been a case of whodunit at the Georgian president's guest palace when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his entourage spent the night and some of the silverware went missing. But there was no mystery about where to send the bill. President Eduard Shevardnadze forwarded the Israeli leader a \$80 bill, along with an itemized list of 12 towels, two TV remote controls, one clothes brush, seven knives, nine forks and four fish forks, noted as "broken or missing" when the Israeli delegation left Shevardnadze's guest house on March 23.

Calling the missing items "a matter of normal wear and tear," Netanyahu spokesman Avi Bushinsky said the Israeli government would pay the bill.

Sailor find love letter from WWI

LONDON (R) — A fisherman has caught a British soldier's last message in a bottle to his wife, 85 years after it was thrown into the sea. Private Thomas Hughes wrote the message to his wife on the way to the trenches in France. Twelve days later he was dead. After netting the old bottle, fisherman Steve Gowen told Thursday's Sun tabloid: "It looked very old and when I wiped the grit and dirt off, I could see what appeared to be a note inside it." Bidding farewell to his wife, Hughes wrote: "To a sweet for the present — your hubby."

France claims most surnames

PARIS (AFP) — France has two families named Zorro and 44 Assessins but the last person to have the surname of Hitler had it changed in 1946, says a book that claims the French have the world's largest number of names. "France has around 4 million different patronymics. It is both a world record and an evolving heritage — 200,000 names have disappeared in a century while 520,000 new surnames have appeared," writes Laurent Fordant in "The Atlas of Surnames in France." The book, based on data from the INSEE national statistics office, records for example that since 1891, 100 people were born with the name Genouille (Frog), some of whom changed it to the more aristocratic-sounding Du le Tang (literally From the Pond).

NEWS IN BRIEF

Libyan airline to resume flights

CAIRO (AFP) — Libyan Arab Airlines (LAA) will resume flights within two weeks following U.N. suspension of a seven-year air and arms embargo on Tripoli, company President Mohammad Absim said here on Friday. He was speaking to reporters before leaving Cairo for Jordan as part of an Arab tour to discuss with regional aviation officials LAA's return to international skies. "The seven years of embargo harmed the company's fleet, which comprises 27 planes including Boeings 727 and Fokkers, and navigation equipment at Tripoli airport because we could not buy spare parts," Absim said. He said LAA will eventually announce a plan to develop its fleet in a bid to face up to international competition.

Peace progress will lead to attacks'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Progress in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process will lead to greater efforts by Palestinian Islamists to commit suicide attacks against Israelis, according to a report published Friday. The report by the State Prosecutor's Office and Shin Bet security service published in the Haaretz newspaper said suicide attacks were "ironically the direct result of progress in the peace process which terrorist organisations want to stop with their actions." "Since the signing of the Oslo autonomy accords [in 1993] and the launch of peace negotiations with the Palestinians the terrorist threat has intensified," the report said. The report said the number of anti-Israeli attacks has fallen since the election of right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in May 1996 and the subsequent stalemate in the peace process. The number of deaths from anti-Israeli attacks has fallen from 63 in 1996 to 29 in 1997 and 11 last year, the report said.

IAEA found no materiel at Iraqi palaces'

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) found no trace of nuclear activities during inspections last year of Iraqi presidential palaces, an IAEA report said Thursday. The IAEA's six-monthly report to the U.N. Security Council, obtained by AFP, said that "environmental samples" were taken during U.N. inspections of eight so-called presidential sites from March 26 to April 3 last year. Analysis of the results, received in the last six months, "to date, shows no indication of the presence of proscribed materials or the conduct of proscribed activities at any of the sites visited," the report said. The inspections of the eight presidential sites, which Iraq declared off-limits to the U.N. weapons inspectors in November, were organised in the presence of diplomats under an agreement signed by U.N. chief Kofi Annan and Iraq in February last year.

Iran official urges clampdown on attire

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's conservative judiciary chief Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi called for a government clampdown Friday on the increasing relaxation of the strict dress code for women imposed following the 1979 Islamic revolution. "It's the government's duty to demand respect for the dress code in public places, cinemas, parks, shops and on the street," Yazdi told worshippers at the main Muslim weekly prayers here. Since the shock presidential election victory of moderate cleric Mohammad Khatami in 1997, women have grown increasingly bold in their defiance of the dress code, particularly in the middle class northern suburbs of the capital. The code requires women to cover their hair with an austere headscarf but more and more women wear brightly coloured scarves far back on their heads revealing elaborate hair styles underneath.

Demonstration at site of Deir Yassin massacre

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Dozens of Palestinians and Israeli Arabs demonstrated Friday on the west Jerusalem site where Israeli soldiers in 1948 massacred residents of the Arab village of Deir Yassin.

One hundred demonstrators came from Orient House, the Palestinian headquarters in Arab east Jerusalem, to Kfar Shaul, a religious Jewish neighbourhood now located on the site of Deir Yassin which was destroyed in the fighting which led to Israel's creation.

The demonstrators, who included a handful of Deir Yassin survivors, gathered at the graveyard below the few stone buildings which remain of the village and laid wreaths and set up grave stones at the site.

"This place represents the beginning of our tragedy and is a symbol of it," Faisal Husseini, the PLO Executive Committee member in charge of the Jerusalem portfolio, told the crowd.

"We should guard this place and we must see that such

things do not happen again. What is happening today in Kosovo is a reminder to us of that fact," Husseini said.

The demonstrators, most of them women, were also accompanied by Mohammad Zuhdi Nashehbi, the finance minister in the Palestinian National Authority and, like Husseini, a descendant of a prominent Jerusalem family.

Israeli police and a large media presence escorted the marchers but there was no violence and no arrests.

The village, the remnants of which have been converted into a psychiatric hospital, was stormed April 10, 1948 by Israeli soldiers.

Also on Friday, about 150 Israelis protested Friday against Jewish settlement of Palestinian territory in the West Bank city of Hebron, a frequent flashpoint for Arab-Israeli confrontation, witnesses said.

"We will not allow Hebron to become another Kosovo," Mossi Raz, secretary general of the Peace Now group, told the crowd.

"We should guard this place and we must see that such

things do not happen again. What is happening today in Kosovo is a reminder to us of that fact," Husseini said.

"I will endeavour to do whatever I can," Mubarak told a joint press conference.

While this would be the first time Egypt has publicly taken on a role of peace-broker between its old Cold War ally and its new economic partner, it has already acted as intermediary.

Egypt's ambassador in Seoul, Hussein Derar, said his country had already acted as a "secret inter-Korean messenger" conveying messages of reconciliation from Seoul, Pyongyang so far shunned Seoul's gestures.

But Yonhap News Agency said Kim Jong-Il sent Mubarak a letter last year in which he said he was "seriously studying the intentions" of Kim Dae-Jung's "Sunshine Policy."

Mubarak said on the first day of his maiden two-day visit aimed at boosting ties, he had "very good" relations

with Kim Jong-Il's father, Kim Il-Sung. Just a year after he died in 1994, Cairo normalised relations with Seoul.

Mubarak was commander in chief of Egypt's air force in 1973 when North Korea sent fighters and pilots to help in the war against Israel. He visited Pyongyang in 1983, 1985 and 1990.

Officials said Cairo's traditional close links with North Korea and its new relationship with the South gave it a special advantage as a mediator between the nations divided by the last Cold War frontier.

Trade was the other dominant factor in the summit between Kim and Mubarak, who is accompanied on his northeast Asian tour by five ministers and 27 industry leaders.

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